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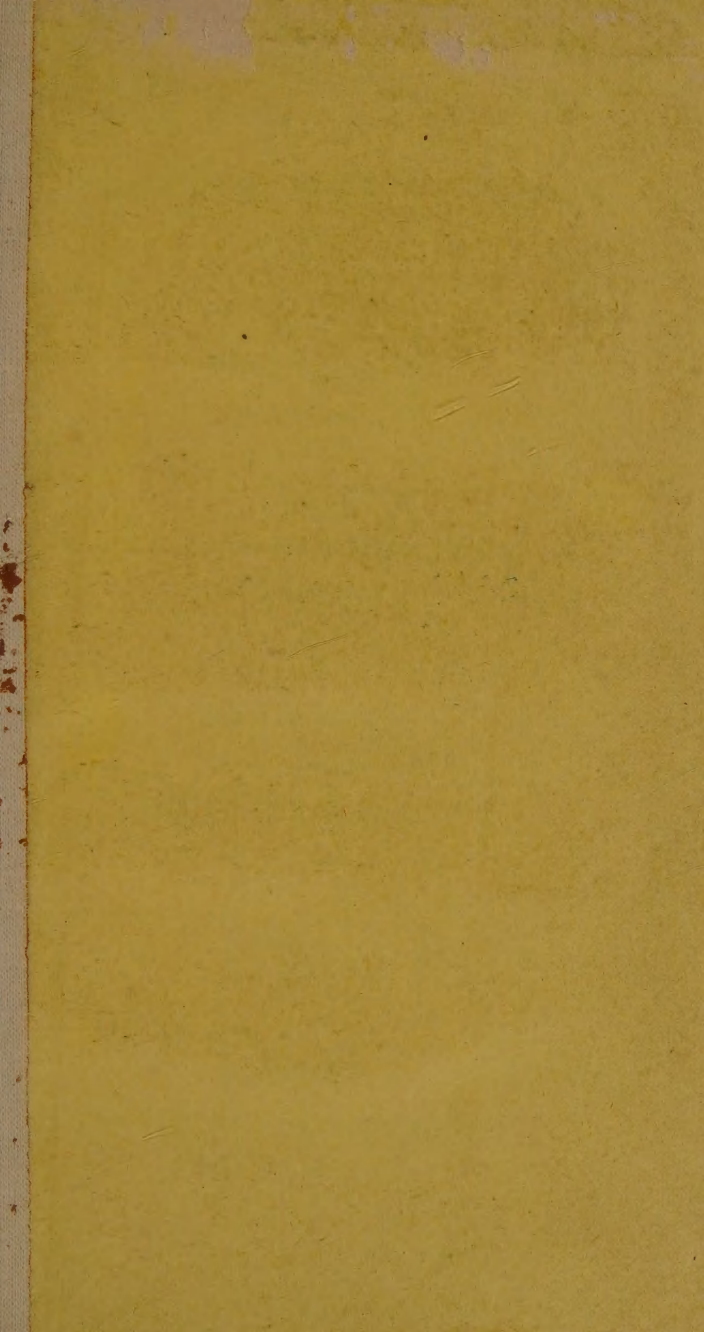
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SRAEL'S WANDERINGS

IN THE

WILDERNESS.

BY THE

REV. G. D. KRUMMACHER,

OF ELBERFELD.

From the German,

BY THE TRANSLATOR OF

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

MES NISBET AND CO. BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

University of Southern California

J. DENNETT, UNION BUILDINGS, LEATHER LANE.

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ISRAEL'S WANDERINGS

FROM THE

WILDERNESS OF KADESH TO THE PROMISED
LAND.

I.

ISRAEL'S PRESUMPTION.

REMARKABLE are the words of the Apostle to Timothy, (2 Eph. ii. 5.) where he says, "No one is crowned, except he strive lawfully." Hence the conflict itself is not the chief thing, but the manner in which it is carried on. Our striving wins the crown, only when conducted in a lawful manner; that is, according to the rules of the conflict. We may extract one of these rules from the history of Gideon, although it is at variance with every conflict with which reason is acquainted. The facts are known to you. Gideon, according to his own expression, (Judges vi. 15.) was

the meanest in Manasseh, and the least in his father's house; and yet was told to go in this his might, and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. And when he pleaded his inability, the Lord answered, "I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Gideon, following the dictate of his own understanding, summons Israel to the battle, and actually brings together thirty-two thousand men; but these were as few, in proportion to the Midianites, as the five loaves and two fishes were, to satisfy five thousand persons. But hear what the Lord says: "the people are yet too many for me to deliver Midian into their hand." Gideon, therefore, called upon all those, who, for any reason whatsoever, had unwillingly joined the host, to leave it, and there were left him ten thousand. But the Lord again said, "the people are yet too many;" and at length only three hundred remained. Why did the Lord order it thus? He himself tells us, in (chap. vii. verse 2.) "lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me;" whilst all the honour of it was to belong to the Lord alone. It is evident, therefore, that in order to strive lawfully, a person may be too strong and too prudent.

The strangest mode of fighting is, probably, that which Jehoshaphat adopted, (2 Chron. xx. 20—25.) He ordered the Levitical singers to go before the host, who sang, "praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever;" and thus they went out, with praise and thanksgiving, to meet the foe, after he had confessed, saying, "we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." They manifested a cheer-

ful faith, which is, indeed, the victory, that overcometh the world, and the enemy experienced a total overthrow.

Shall we mention any other rules? We must strive against *all* sin, and especially against bosom sins; that is, against those sins to which we are the most easily incited. We must strive earnestly, as those who desire to obtain a complete victory; unweariedly, if this complete victory be not immediately attained; we must patiently run the race set before us, and exercise courage, for all our foes may be overcome with the divine assistance. Finally, we must also strive in faith, as those who in the Lord have righteousness and strength, and have already overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

But now let us consider the reverse of this, in the case of the children of Israel.

DEUT. i. 40—46.

“But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.

“Then ye answered, and said unto me, ‘We have sinned against the Lord, we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us.’ And when you had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.

“And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, go not up, neither fight, for I am not among you, lest ye be smitten before your enemies.

“So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill.

“And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out

against you, and chased you as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Harmah.

“ And ye returned, and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.

“ So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according to the days that ye abode there.”

The children of Israel are upon their return to the Red Sea; for a while they still proceed along the borders of Canaan, but will eventually enter it at a very opposite point. The order has been issued for them to return; and they must obey, however painful it may be to them. Has not the case been the same with many an individual? One man lies dangerously ill upon his sick bed. The Lord refreshes him in the season of extremity; his comforts delight his soul. His sins do not press upon him; for they are forgiven. The law does not distress him; for it has been fulfilled. Death does not terrify him; it has been overcome. He is not afraid to stand before God; for he is his father. Nor is he afraid of judgment; for having once been in it, he does not enter it a second time. Sinful corruption torments him no more, the spirit has it under its feet. The world disgusts him, and he is more than delivered from it. His family do not fetter his heart; for his longing to be with Christ far exceeds his earthly attachments. The powers of the world to come take entire possession of him. He thinks he is now upon the point of entering Canaan. But it is said to him, turn back! Health returns; the staff of his pilgrimage, which he thought he was on the point of laying aside for ever, he must again resume; he has still a long way before him, he must continue a long time in

Kadesh, experience a variety of painful occurrences, and proceed by many a path, of which he had no conception, so that frequently he knows not what would be his feelings, were he then to be called away out of this life.

Another case. After a long and manifold succession of consolations and afflictions, the individual is at length comforted in a powerful manner, and receives important light upon evangelical truth, the real nature of godliness, Christ, his person, sacrifice, and his relation to us. This light is accompanied with a profound and vital impression, and every thing becomes natural, and entirely one with the soul; the peace of God preserves the man's heart and mind in such a manner, his mountain stands so strong through divine mercy, and the practice of godliness in all its extent becomes so easy, that he cannot but think, that he shall dwell in this comfortable state for ever. He has found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, and finds in Moses and the law nothing but Jesus of Nazareth. He has found him whom his soul loveth; he possesses him, and will not let him go. The sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, and with Job, he is willing to die in this warm, soft, and convenient nest. But even here the command may go forth, to turn back by the way of the Red Sea, to turn back into a more profound consciousness of the greatness of his sin, misery, and insufficiency. The grapes, the pomegranates, and the figs disappear; he must again content himself with the manna, of which each receives an equal quantity; from the bitter waters of Marah, he proceeds to verdant Elim, and from thence to the trying stations of Dophkah and Alush. The teacher is

then compelled to resume his alphabet; those who could read fluently, then find it difficult to spell the name of Jesus and the promises, and are unable to connect them in a proper manner; preachers then begin to be very devout hearers; fathers gladly mingle with the babes in Christ, in order to learn from them; and those that acted as guides, now enquire the way themselves. The feathers fall from the splendid peacocks, and they creep into some retired corner; the heaven-aspiring eagle sits mournfully, and autumn robs the most harmonious throats of their melodious tones, so that they croak like any other bird. "Back!" it is said; "Return to the place where you were forty years ago!" "Alas, master! for it was borrowed!"

A third case. There are serious individuals, who are not satisfied with a common every-day religion. They are desirous of effecting something great. They are disgusted at the idea of always continuing poor sinners, and feel a repugnance at having constantly to complain of themselves. Religion appears to them to be something truly sublime, and they are resolved that it shall manifest itself as such, at least in them. Though others may peril themselves, by a less precise walk and conduct, they, for their parts, will do better, and neglect nothing. The resolution is commendable. They put their hands to the work, in order to complete their sanctification; and their intentions are sincere; but, at the same time, too much stress is laid upon outward things, and too little attention paid to the inward ground of the heart. The punctual attendance upon every opportunity for edification is then very highly estimated, as well as reading and vocal prayer at their appointed hours, and other things, which are laudable,

when practised without overlooking the weightier matters of the law, such as faith, mercy, and judgment. The individual then denies himself in certain things which have reference to the world and himself, and takes it much amiss of others if they do not tread in his steps. He frequently succeeds for a season to such a degree, that he begins to take a pleasure in himself, and imagines he has advanced so far as to be soon able to ask, "What lack I yet?" But he is then told to return by the way of the Red Sea, and the words in Isaiah lvii. 12. 17. are then applicable to him; "I will declare thy righteousness and thy works; for they shall not profit thee. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Such characters are then frequently called upon to experience dreadful temptations. The abyss of their hearts unfolds itself to them, so that they are also compelled to exclaim, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They are obliged to return to the Red Sea of Jesus Christ's vicarious sacrifice, in which all the enemies of their peace are drowned, but of which they previously desired to know little; are compelled to resolve upon piteously entreating, as the vilest of sinners, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, may cleanse them also from all sin; upon begging for grace, for mere grace; and they now no longer venture to speak a word of that worthiness, of which they were previously so fond of boasting, and even refuse to hear of it. That passage is then also verified: "I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners."

“ For thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. He that trusteth in me, shall inherit the land.”

A fourth case. A person who fears the Lord, and takes pleasure in walking in his ways, and in observing his statutes that he may do them, is overtaken in a fault—he stumbles, falls, and sins. This causes him great distress and heart-rending sorrow. It is now evident, also, that he is not of the world, but otherwise minded. He stands afar off, and dares not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven. Generally speaking, the first thing that such a backslider thinks of is, that he will do better in future, and that he will purify himself from all pollution of the flesh and spirit. His confidence in the Lord has suffered greatly. He regards him as an offended master, and himself as a worthless and unfaithful servant, who has merited punishment, and is not worthy to appear before the eyes of his master, nor be seen by him. He then wearies himself in the multitude of his ways, and becomes, meanwhile, increasingly poor, barren, and comfortless, without being, in the slightest degree, better ; nay, the law to which he applies, manifests itself as the strength of sin, which excites all manner of concupiscence instead of quenching it, and teaches the soul by experience, that which is described in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. At length the Lord takes pity upon him. He is sent back to the Red Sea, where God performed such a wonderful deliverance ; back to the atoning blood-

shedding of Christ, and to his sacrifice, for the sake of which we are sanctified; back to him, who has invited the weary and heavy-laden, and promised to give them rest. Whither shall I go, exclaims he, but to my covenant God, to the physician of the sin-sick soul? "As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him." "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." And thus the soul cleaves more and more closely to Christ; the more it is convinced, and by painful experience become conscious, that without him it can do nothing, and cannot stand a moment against its sworn enemies.

But what a new and unexpected scene now presents itself to our view! Well may the Lord, by Jeremiah, say, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" or, as Luther has translated it, 'a presumptuous and desponding thing,' who can know it? The answer follows, "I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins." It is with propriety that the prophet says, immediately afterwards, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for thou art my praise."

The Israelites had just before expressed their despondency, and said, "We cannot go up against the land; we are much too weak, the people is greater and taller than we; the cities, also are great, and walled up to heaven; every attempt of the kind would only be foolish, and prove unsuccessful."

Is not this, also, the language of many, with reference to religion? Do they not say, "we cannot do this, and we cannot perform that;" and it is in a certain sense true, what Joshua says, "ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God." (ch. xxiv. 19.) Happy

in thus having found a pretext for rejecting religion, they are unwilling to make the slightest attempt, or even to put up a single petition to the Lord to strengthen and enable them, and refuse to come to him.

But how bold and presumptuous do the people all at once become, as if nothing were easier than to take possession of the land! Here we are, say they, and will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God has commanded us, for we have sinned in formerly refusing. This they now sought to make good, by showing their determination to act otherwise. But, ah! it is no such easy matter to serve the Lord, and hit the right path, as thoughtless people probably suppose. Who, it may well be asked, who is sufficient for these things? Of ourselves we are not sufficient to think a good thought. But our sufficiency is of God, and such trust have we through Christ to Godward. "We have sinned," said they. But how did they say it? Like David? After which it was said to him, "the Lord hath, therefore, taken away thy sin." No, but like Saul, whom it availed not; they said it with a presumptuous and unbroken heart.

They would go up. But what was their confidence? From whence would they derive the strength requisite for this great and difficult undertaking? Yesterday, they believed it was impossible; how is it, therefore, that to-day they regard it as practicable and easy? They fall from one extreme into the other, from one fault into another; from unbelief and cowardice into presumption, and from despondency into defiance. How astonishing is the perverseness of the human heart! Who would believe that it could be

the scene of such opposite improprieties? Does not Peter here occur to every one, who manifested, first, a presumptuous self-confidence, expressed in the words, "though all should be offended, yet will not I;" and maintained it stiffly, even against the Lord Jesus, who is compelled to let him have the last word; and then, cowardice, by his inglorious flight? His presumption, again, induces him to enter the palace of the high priest, where his presence was unnecessary; but his cowardice immediately returns, on hearing the expression, "thou wast also with Jesus;" and likewise his presumption, in so obstinately denying it.

Think of David, at one time, saying, "though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear," and yet soon after complaining, that he should one day fall by the hands of his enemies. At another time he supposes himself so firmly established, that he shall never be moved; and then again, he fears that he shall never lift up his head any more, and says, "my hope is perished from the Lord, I am cut off from his countenance."

How frequent is the deficiency of that moderation which ought to follow in the train of faith! At one time we are much too joyful, alert, and courageous, and are able to sing, "I can bear all things, I can venture every thing, and though the whole of the infernal host were opposed to me, yet, in all these things, we come off more than conquerors;" and have then no longer any ear for the voice of God, warning us not to be presumptuous, but fear; to rejoice with trembling; to take heed, whilst so secure in our standing, lest we fall; and rather to boast of our weakness than of our strength. Such characters are so much captivated

by the state in which they are at the time, that they reject every thing of the kind above-mentioned, as legal, unevangelical, and self-righteous, and even attack it with harshness and violence, so that they often express themselves in an immoderate manner, in order that it may be the opposite of any thing of a legal nature. Nor will they take warning from the example of others, and call to mind that the Lord may, perhaps, see fit to lead them in more humiliating paths, and that the gold must be purified. No wonder, therefore, that at another time they are completely faint-hearted, when the Lord sees fit to hide his face from them. They then act as if every thing that had occurred in them had been nothing, as if they would never be again delivered from their bondage, and cry out with the disciples, "we perish!" although it is far from being the case. It would be better, like David, to rejoice with trembling, and when they are afraid, to hope in the Lord. Goodness and mercy will certainly follow believers all the days of their lives. But every one, who is accepted as a son, is also chastised; and all of them will return thanks to the Lord, not only that he comforts them, but also for being angry with them, and for having in faithfulness afflicted them.

The children of Israel are resolved to go forth to fight, "as the Lord commanded us," add they. However, I am ignorant of any such command. It was, indeed, said, "the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee." "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble,

neither be ye terrified because of them ; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." He it is that gives the power to perform such exploits. Their resolution might not, in itself, have been amiss, but it was then too late. They ought to have decided yesterday, and the day before. There was now no longer any time for it. Truly, a lamentable circumstance ! Those that seek the Lord early shall find him. " Oh," exclaims Jesus, " that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace !" " Work, while it is called to-day ; the night cometh when no man can work." " Believe in the light whilst ye have it, that ye may become children of the light." Do not neglect your day, and take good heed to yourselves. They now, indeed, said, " here we are," but they had suffered the right point of time to pass by, without availing themselves of it ; and it was, therefore, now in vain. " Because I called, and ye refused ; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I, also, will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

When an individual is affected, awakened, and alarmed, when the word of the Lord comes to him, since he does not leave himself without a witness in the case of any ; when he hears his voice, calling to him, " awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, make haste to save thy soul ;" if the salvation of his soul becomes a matter of importance to him, and if the Lord does this, perhaps the second, or even the third time, that he may bring back his soul from

destruction, and “enlighten him with the light of the living,” as Elihu says in Job xxxiii. 30. then it may be especially said, “mark well, O Job!” It will, perhaps, never return; neglect not to turn unto the Lord by earnest prayer, that he may interfere for thee, otherwise thy case may be for ever hopeless, and this thou art surely not willing to hazard. But, alas! how many tread in the steps of Jerusalem, suffer the day of salvation to pass by, without availing themselves of it, and only arrive when the doors are already closed, and are opened no more, notwithstanding the loud knocking; and it is said, “I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” Of this dreadful result let every one most earnestly beware, especially those who are conscious of feeling somewhat of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon them, lest with them the last be worse than the first.

If the intention of the Israelites to fight, was too late; it was, also, on the other hand, not properly founded; for they relied solely upon that strength which they imagined they possessed. “We (just as we are) will go up and fight;” and that, too, against a people that were greater and stronger than they. They prepared for the battle; but how? Every one girded on his armour, expecting to accomplish it by this means. Moses pointed out to them how much they had miscalculated in their undertaking, and said to them, “go not up, neither fight, for the Lord is not among you, lest ye be smitten before your enemies.” By this he exhorts them to desist from their vain confidence, and represents to them, that their mode of procedure was not of a kind to permit them

to place their confidence in God, because they were acting according to their own judgment, and not according to divine command. Their obedience must now consist in being content with the disagreeable path which they were obliged to take, in consequence of their disobedience, and in renouncing their own will, even in things apparently good. Ought it not to be all-important to us, that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and in every undertaking? What do we think we can accomplish without him? What will succeed without his assistance and blessing? And even supposing that an undertaking should succeed; without having his approbation, it would prove highly injurious to us.

With respect to the armour in which they imagined themselves equipped, their ideas were very different from those of their subsequent king, David, when he says, "Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies," (Psalm xliv. 5—7;) and in the fourth verse, "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but thy right hand, and thine arm and the light of thy countenance." In the thirty-third Psalm, he says, "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." God reproves the heathenish Sennacherib for boasting, and saying, "By the

strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent, and I have removed the bounds of the people," &c. (Isaiah x. 13.) And shall God tolerate a sentiment so hateful to him, in his people, which he cannot bear in a heathen? That be far from him! He will humble them in such a manner that they shall not say, "By my power and the strength of my hand have I done this;" but will confess with the church, and say, "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us." (Isaiah xxvi. 12.)

The children of Israel, in their self-confidence, are an image of those who, without Christ, regard themselves as capable of working out the salvation of their souls; and who, generally speaking, ascribe much, if not all, to their own strength. This very thing is the root of unbelief, and salvation is never found upon this path. It is a false foundation, which must be overturned, in order that all confidence in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness may be expelled from our hearts. If any one thinks himself to be wise, let him become a fool in his own eyes, that he may be wise; if any one regards himself as righteous, let him know that God only justifies the ungodly; if any one thinks himself able to do something, let him learn of Jesus, that we are unable to do any thing; if any one regards himself as something, let him know that he is nothing, or that he deceives himself. Christ is the Saviour—not we. He is the way, and none beside him. Only through him do we obtain righteousness and strength. He it is that works in us, both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure. It is he who strengthens us.

What did the children of Israel accomplish?—and

what would they have accomplished? In their God-forgetting self-confidence, and trusting to their miserable armour, they marched up the hill, and certainly exalted themselves. But what befell them? That which finally befalls all who trust to themselves. They were put to shame. The Amorites, although their name merely signifies babblers, went out against these conceited and imaginary heroes, and discomfited them; fell upon them like a swarm of bees, so that nothing was left them but to take to flight, and they were chased even unto Hormah. But all things must work together for good to the people of God; this humiliation was more salutary for them, than if they had gained the victory, and the flight more beneficial than an advance would have been. It taught them to renounce their self-confidence; they learnt to accommodate themselves to the Lord's will, and to place their hopes on him alone. And were not these great advantages? Does not Paul, also, adduce this as the object which was to be attained in him, by the heavy affliction which befell him in Asia? We behold the disciples, also, as if chased by bees, fleeing from the captive Jesus. But did not this, also, contribute to render them those "little ones," upon whom the Lord promised to turn his hand? (Zech. xiii. 7.)

They were chased even unto Hormah—that is, according to the meaning of the word, partly cursed, and banished, and also entirely dedicated to the Lord. The place was thus denominated in the sequel, after they had conquered it, according to Numbers xxi., not so much by weapons as by prayer. Thus it was turned to their advantage. "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! for though I fall, yet I shall arise;"

such has been the language of the church in every age ; “ and though I sit in darkness, yet the Lord will be a light unto me.” The hair of Sampson grows again, and with it his strength. Woe, then, to the triumphing Philistines !

They were now entirely devoted to the Lord, and sanctified, that they might trust in him alone, and expect all that is good in all humility and patience, from him alone. It cost them tears, indeed, but they were useful tears.

Be it then, that we are overthrown, mercifully overthrown, even unto Hormah ; annihilated in ourselves, put to shame, and paralyzed with reference to all our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness. Cast upon thee, O Lord, from the womb, thou art our refuge in all generations ! “ Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God !” Of a truth, Israel has no help, but in the Lord. Let the fatherless find mercy with thee ; for our help standeth in the name of the Lord. Amen.

II.

KADESH.

NUMB. XX. 1.

“Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin, in the first month, and the people abode in Kadesh, and Miriam died there, and was buried there.”

THE signification of the two names of this station is what we shall first consider. We have already noticed the meaning of the word Zin on a former occasion. What does the term Kadesh imply? The word, “desert” can also be translated, school. If we do so, the meaning is, they abode in the school of holiness. But this station has also the name of Barnea, and that ruins the whole; for Kadesh-Barnea signifies, “holiness of the inconstant son.” Bells have their name from this word, because their tongues are moved about in them. But of what value is an unstable godliness? It is of no value. “He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” We must become entire and stable characters. And this must likewise be the case with reference to the knowledge of self and sin; hence it is added, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still,

and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ;” let him recognize his unholiness, not merely in some things, but in all, in order that he may entirely depart from himself and unite himself with Christ.

The word Kadesh, or holiness, might afford a subject for long and important consideration concerning its nature, necessity, parts, rules, the means of promoting it, and the way to attain it with safety. In the Old Testament dispensation, as the Apostle informs us in Heb. ix. 8. the way to sanctification was not yet revealed, and the present station of the children of Israel can only be called a school of holiness, inasmuch as it calls forth the opposite. It shows us by facts, that in ourselves there is no holiness, and that the latter cannot proceed from us, but must be imparted and communicated to us from some other quarter ; it shows us that the law, even in its greatest strictness, is unable to render us holy ; since, instead of holiness, it gives only the knowledge of sin, which is quickened by it, so that it works all manner of concupiscence, and is the strength of sin.

Therefore, in order that our godliness may be of the proper kind, we must, according to Romans vii., be slain by the law, and betroth ourselves to another husband, which is Christ. He is the way, and whosoever walketh therein shall attain to true godliness, in a pleasing, and not a painful manner, and advance in it from strength to strength, until he arrives in Zion. This desert boasted, indeed, of the name of holiness, but it could not impart it ; this was reserved for another, for Christ, who is made unto us sanctification, and who, according to Heb. ii. 11, sanctifies us. And

in stating this, we have at the same time mentioned the principal point.

Know, therefore, that in order to a successful perseverance and progress in godliness, not merely diligence and activity, but also ability is requisite ; and it is this which we ought primarily to strive to obtain ; otherwise our activity may resemble the motion of a pendulum, which is continued day and night without making any progress. In order that a lame man may walk, ability to do so must be imparted to him. This is accomplished, as regards spiritual things, by believing in Jesus Christ, who alone gives us the ability. I would here recommend to the lovers of a true and cheerful godliness, an excellent work translated from the English, and recently reprinted, entitled, “ The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification.” It certainly requires a thoughtful reader, and one whose mind has been already exercised in the word of truth ; but to such individuals, this single book may serve in the place of many, though they may perhaps feel themselves compelled to read it more than once, which they will do with pleasure. For although we require no other instruction than that which is contained in the Scriptures, yet a mind, properly directed, does not satisfy itself either with sermons, books, or the Scriptures themselves, but turns unto him of whom they testify, and thus finds all in one.

But let us make at least a few general remarks upon sanctification. When we use this term, we mean godliness in its whole extent, manifesting itself in the fulfilment of the divine commands, which are, summarily, love to God and our neighbour. This sanctification, or godliness, is no less necessary in order to

fellowship with God, and consequently to eternal salvation, than justification or the forgiveness of sins; although the most exalted state of godliness can never become in any measure, either on the whole or in part, the basis of hope towards God and of his favour. This foundation is Christ alone and entirely. Another foundation can no man lay, and he that would make the attempt, would only injure his own soul by so doing.

It is true that the blessings of the covenant of grace constitute but one sevenfold golden chain, which, in order to be complete, as it ought to be, must not be deficient in any of its parts; yet still it is true that one of these blessings exceeds the other in excellency. Thus the calling of God is manifestly the most important of all, in a certain sense; for it is the commencement of all. But for this very reason, because it is only the commencement, and nothing more; it is comparatively the least, and the frequently imperceptible point of transition from nature to grace, and hence related to both, since, in some respects, it is only a preparation for the real commencement of the work of grace. Glorification is the last and closing link of the golden diamond chain, and excels all the rest in glory, or combines and includes them in itself.

Now sanctification is also one of the most excellent blessings of the covenant of grace; even as amongst David's thirty heroes there were three who were superior to the rest, however valiant were the latter. (1 Chron. xii.) It is especially excellent, because it presupposes four such excellent works and blessings, by which the way is prepared for its appearance, even as the rich and golden autumn is preceded by spring and

summer. We have just mentioned one of these preparatory works. The second, which it pre-supposes, is the great work of regeneration; the third, and no less great, is faith; and the fourth, as its peculiar source and root, is justification. Then appears sanctification, this "prince's daughter, whose feet are beautiful with shoes," and thus shod with the preparation of the gospel, she walks with a firm step. Aye, and in order to walk in this manner, it is at the same time requisite that the individual should retain the conviction of the forgiveness procured through Christ, of all his sins, and even of that sinful nature with which he will have to strive all his life long; that he be assured of his actual justification and acceptance into favour; that he be delivered from an evil and accusing conscience, cleansed from dead works by the blood of Christ; that he have no longer any conscience of sin, because it has once been purified; that he should understand how to approach with boldness to the throne of grace; and that he be strengthened in the faith. It is so self-evident that, in order to all this, an abundant measure of the Holy Spirit is requisite, that it is scarcely necessary to make it the subject of particular remark.

Sanctification is therefore, manifestly, one of the most excellent of the blessings of grace, and comparatively excels most of the others. It is superior to regeneration, for by it Christ is formed in the soul; and inferior to faith, for by it the heart is purified. We are sanctified through faith in him. It is, in many respects, more precious than justification, even as the latter, in other points, is more excellent than sanctification. This is the case with the former here on earth, because of its

being perfect here below, whilst the latter continues defective; it gives the conscience a perfect peace towards God, which sanctification, for the above-mentioned reason of imperfection, never can nor ought to afford. It bestows a legal claim on the rich blessings of God's house; but who would dare to found such a claim upon his sanctification without instantaneously losing it? Justification repels all accusations and charges; but how could godliness take the place of such a shield? since, as long as we live, we must confess that we offend in a variety of ways. Justification approaches boldly to God; but sanctification exclaims, "Enter not into judgment!"

On the other hand, sanctification is more excellent than justification; for whilst the latter gives the right, the former leads the individual to enjoyment. Justification orders the liberation of those that are bound and imprisoned; sanctification opens the dungeon, loosens the bonds, and conducts them into a large space. In justification, adoption is legally bestowed upon the sinner; by sanctification he is really adorned with the image of God. The former is the judicial sentence, the latter its accomplishment. The former lays the foundation and forms the plan; the latter carries it into effect, and erects the temple, in which God dwells and walks.

But why should we prolong the comparison? Both are inseparably connected. He only who is justified will be sanctified, and will certainly be so. He that desires the one, seeks the other also. Both these precious stones are found in the same ring, which was put upon the finger of the returning prodigal. The origin and source of both is Christ. Even as he is the way

to the forgiveness of sins, so he is likewise to purification from sin, to renovation of heart, and to facility in the exercise of new obedience. This must be well observed, lest we run in uncertainty, and beat the air, which, though it may fatigue us, will produce no effect upon the adversary. If you are desirous of bringing forth much fruit, abide in him; for without him you can do nothing. We are not justified in one way, and sanctified in another; for there is only one way, which is Christ, by which we attain to both.

We ought to be ardently solicitous to abound increasingly in the work of the Lord, and to lay aside more completely the sin which so easily besets us; to put off the old man, which is corrupt through the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Not content with having made a commencement in that which is good, or even supposing that we are already perfect, and have already attained, we ought unceasingly to press toward the mark, in order to attain that for which we are apprehended of Jesus Christ. The church of God is certainly encamped in Kadesh. But he that committeth sin is of the devil. He that does not eagerly receive Jesus as his wisdom and sanctification, justification and redemption, is seeking to divide that which is indivisible, and does not obtain him at all. Where the blood of Christ really comes, it purifies; and where this effect is not produced, there it is not. Therefore, follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; yea, let us

perfect holiness in the fear of God, and cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit.

However undeniable may be the necessity of this, and its infallible and blissful result in a truly religious character, yet we ought to be aware that sanctification can only be attained, and progress made in it, in the same manner as justification—that is, solely through faith, and not by the works of the law; whilst those who go about to establish the latter, accomplish so little, whatever trouble they may give themselves, that they even remain under the curse.

Nevertheless, the mystery of godliness is great. A man's speech may be very rational, and yet deceive; and it is against this that the Apostle warns us in Col. ii. 8. adding, that philosophy only tends to destruction, because it is “after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” If it is difficult to explain the doctrine of justification, it is still more difficult to explain the doctrine of sanctification. Let God, therefore, reveal this unto you, as Paul says, Phil. iii. 15.

After having explained the signification of the name of this encampment, let us pass on to the consideration of the events which occurred there, and which we find indicated in Numb. xx. 1—22.

The first event which happened there, was the death of Miriam, or Mary, the sister of Moses: she must have been very old, for when Moses was born, she was already grown up, and was termed a maid, or young woman. When the Egyptian princess had just caused her infant brother to be taken up out of the water, and whilst the babe lay weeping at her feet, and with its

mute and yet eloquent tears, besought her compassion, it was she who proposed to the king's daughter to fetch a Hebrew nurse for the young child ; and, on receiving the command to do so, brought his own mother, who suckled him. Moses, her youngest brother, at the time of her death, was a hundred and nineteen years old ; she, therefore, probably attained to the age of a hundred and thirty-five. At Hazeroth, the thirteenth encampment, she committed, in company with her brother Aaron, a great fault with reference to her brother Moses, who was then assaulted by all, even by these his nearest relatives. She was punished for it with leprosy, but healed soon after, at the intercession of Aaron and Moses. She was, however, excluded from the camp for seven days, and was thus humbled before all the people. This doubtless proved a very salutary humiliation to her.

It is remarkable, that Moses warns the people, in Deut. xxiv. 8, "to take heed of the plague of leprosy, and to remember what the Lord their God had done to Miriam by the way, after that they were come out of Egypt." The prophet Micah calls her to mind seven hundred years after, in a very honourable manner, when he says, in chap. vi. 3, 4, "O my people, what have I done to thee, and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify against me ; for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants ; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." She must have rendered many and important services to the children of Israel ; and what these were, as well as her name, are inscribed in the book of God. She was a godly person, and this is the most excellent and glorious thing that can be said

of any one, and the highest honour which can be put upon her, even were her name not known upon earth—as is the case with the generality of the godly—yet in heaven it is the more celebrated, and this again is of greater importance than if we figured here, like Pharaoh, with the title of Majesty and Royal Highness, to which no attention is paid there. She was now very old, and necessarily reached at length the end of her course. We die also, without living to such an age as she. Let us only take care that we may die like her, and then we shall not, in reality, see death. Although we have not the means of attaining to the same age, yet still we can attain to the same godliness. Let us, therefore, tread that path. She was obliged to wander for thirty years in the desert, and participate in all its difficulties and inconveniences. She has now reached the true Canaan, which is above, where she has dwelt in blessedness for upwards of three thousand years. Let every one, therefore, choose the good part, that shall never be taken from him.

It is true that in her life a spot appears, since she was induced, by pride and ambition, to act in an improper manner towards Moses. She wished to participate more in the government of God's people, than the moon, when near the sun; and in consequence of this, she became a mere cypher, and even a dead carcase, as Aaron calls her. Beware, therefore, of the plague of leprosy. Infer, from the severe chastisement which was inflicted upon her, the scourge which thy own back deserves. If this worthy person was spat upon in the face for a fault which is not even regarded as one by the dim-sighted, what treatment dost thou deserve? She was chastised because God was her father,

and because he loved her. Does he esteem thee worthy of a salutary correction, or is he reserving thee until the judgment-day for a destructive punishment? Every thing was forgiven her. Canst thou also boast of God as one who forgives thee all thy sins. And lastly, wilt thou be the same in the fire of temptation as out of the conflict?—be the same on a similar occasion to that in which she committed the fault? What are the sins against which the goodness of thy nature secures thee, if God should leave thee to stand alone? Be not high-minded, but fear. Whosoever he be amongst you that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall. But, whoever is conscious of being still inclined to all that is evil, let him humble himself, but not despond; let him lay hold of Jesus Christ, and cleave to him the more ardently.

The venerable and aged Miriam had, therefore, departed this life, and slept in peace, and still sleeps in Kadesh, as it respects the body. She must continue to sleep for a season, until the great Waker comes, whose voice awakes all out of sleep; those that have done good, like her, to the resurrection of life; but those that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. From this she is safe. She died, and was buried in Kadesh. I do not find that the people wept over her; nor was it necessary. She had made a glorious exchange. Her pilgrimage was particularly tedious and wearisome, and its termination welcome, even to nature. Therefore, although it might have been thorny, yet now it had happily terminated, whatever it had been outwardly. Though her name, in one sense, signifies obstinacy, yet she had been conscious, with pain and

grief, of its existence in her, and been obliged to suffer many a severe chastisement on account of it. This natural obstinacy was removed by death, and she would have been heartily glad if it had come long before. What an alleviation for the disembodied and unfettered spirit, which no longer felt any obstruction with respect to that which is good ! How must this aged prophetess have felt, on arriving from the waste howling wilderness in the celestial plains, where all is exultation and harmony ! What a transition from the midst of a multitude of stiff-necked people, who were always brooding over some new evil, and generating new punishments, to the lovely company of pure and holy angels and men ; since being herself redeemed from the body of this death, she was able perfectly to serve, love, and glorify God together with them. What joy must it have afforded her to see her holy progenitors, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, of whom she had heard so much, and to perceive in them her beloved and tender friends, as well as her mother, and all the godly women, whom she had known and not known here below. What an ecstatic light beamed upon her, when the mysterious covering was taken away from the face of Moses, and when she looked beyond the opened veil. If on a former occasion her joy was so great, when standing upon the opposite bank of the Red Sea, after having safely passed it with the whole congregation, that she took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances, and Miriam answered them, “ Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ! ”—what must have been her feelings on this occasion ! How will she have congratulated herself—

how will others have congratulated her on having eternally escaped from every Pharaoh, and every Red Sea, and every desert, and from herself besides !

Her body was buried in Kadesh, in holiness, and purified by death and corruption, and cleansed from every thing that was unsuitable for dwelling in the light, and that rendered it an inconvenient instrument for the glory of God, until, at the last day, it shall rise again, a glorious, lucid, sacred body, like that of Christ. But her soul in particular immersed itself entirely in Kadesh, in holiness. She became wholly free from sin, and filled with God.

And such may and will be our happy lot, if we walk upon the way of holiness, on which no lion nor any other ravenous beast goes up, on which no impure person walks, nor foot proceeds. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Amen.

III.

THE STRIFE AT MERIBAH.

NUMB. xx. 2—13.

“ And there was no water for the congregation ; and they gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron.

“ And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord !

“ And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there ?

“ And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place ? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates ; neither is there any water to drink.

“ And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces ; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

“ Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes ; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock ; so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

“ And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

“ And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water out of this rock ?

“ And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

“ This is the water of Meribah ; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.”

THIS is the second event at Kadesh, that notorious place where the children of Israel had suffered such chastisement thirty-eight years before, on the return of the spies.

We are, therefore, still in Kadesh, or holiness, and how can we be better situated ? But, alas ! a pressing want of water has arisen ! The Israelites are entirely destitute of an element, the want of which nothing can supply, and which is attended with fatal consequences. Hitherto the stream from the rock in Horeb, which Moses had smitten, had followed them, and sufficiently provided them with excellent water. But now it had dried up, and this placed them in a most distressing situation, and exposed them to the most imminent danger of death. This water was not produced by natural causes, nor did it dry up from natural causes. God caused it to flow, and it was he who withheld it.

What were the Lord's intentions in acting thus ; and what is his intention at present, when he suffers want and hardship to befall us ? The want here felt, was certainly a bodily want ; but was, nevertheless, the figure of a spiritual necessity ; for the rock that followed them was Christ, and the water, the gifts of his grace. God purposes our humiliation. We here see

what we deserve; that is, the being deprived of even the smallest favour—of water, and being left to languish with respect to the body. We here see what wretched creatures we are without God and his good pleasure. Did we not possess Christ, we should be, as it were, in an arid desert, where nothing is to be expected but a horrible death. If we are deprived of his influences, our marrow is dried up like the drought of summer.

We here perceive our impotency. Can we produce a single drop of water? Can we cause the rain to descend, or the sun to shine? Are we able of ourselves to make even a single hair white or black? or can all the potentates on earth accomplish it? Is it by such considerations that we ought to attack our deeply-rooted self-confidence? The physician's art leaves him in the lurch, the merchant his speculations, the general his tactics, and the husbandman his knowledge of the weather. All mankind are less than nothing. The security in which they live is immediately shaken, on the breaking in of some contagious disorder, which scorns every preventative, and strews its path with innumerable trophies of its malignant power; or when impetuous water-floods sweep along, and fire pursues its ravages. It is by such overwhelming occurrences that God seeks to point out to us, that he is God alone.

The children of Israel had drunk, for the space of thirty-eight years, of the stream that followed them; and without reflecting further on the benefit which they enjoyed, they supposed that there was a necessity for its flowing in such a manner, and that it could not be otherwise. All at once the scene changed; and such is also the uncertain nature of every thing which

is not God. By bringing upon us a variety of privations and hardships, he seeks to induce us, by means of faith and prayer, to take refuge with him, and turn unto him.

But woe unto those who verify what is written in Isaiah i. 5, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." "Their face is harder than the rock, and they will not repent." Whilst happy are they who say with the prophet, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." (Hosea vi. 1.) "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." (ver. 3.) The Lord also suffers distress to arise, in order that his aid may be the more glorious, our gratitude the more fervent, our heart the more joyful, and our confidence the more firm. Fear not, O land, but be joyful and of good courage, for the Lord is able to do even greater things than these!

May the divine intentions be realized in every one who is thus exercised! But the conduct of the children of Israel in the wilderness is only too universal; and how lamentable is it, that it was not in this instance the people alone who acted in a culpable manner. The people manifest their former disposition on every fresh occasion. Thirty-eight years had now elapsed since they had acted in such a criminal manner at another Kadesh, in the desert of Paran, that they were all of them sentenced to die in the wilderness, after they should have wandered about in it for forty years; and now they again make it evident how greatly they deserve this punishment. They are not an iota better than before, and though their encampment may be called holiness, it seems only to bear that name, in

order that the reverse may be the more clearly manifested in them.

They strive with Moses, who, however, suffered hunger and thirst as well as they. They execrate the day in which they left Egypt, which country they highly commend. They call Kadesh "an evil place," and detail very circumstantially its deficiencies. It was no place for seed, nor for figs, vines, nor pomegranates; nor was there even water to drink. And is it not still the case? We pause at natural causes; but who contemplates his sin as the occasion of every evil; who calls to mind God's love and anger, and his own amendment? Sinful man dares to murmur; at one time at the weather, and at another at the hardships endured by himself or those that belong to him; and murmurs to such a degree, as to wish himself dead, like the ungodly Israelites at Kadesh; nay, even puts himself to death, in order to cast himself the more speedily into hell, where he belongs. His complaints prove how righteous and innocent he considers himself; so that he is presumptuous and impious enough to accuse God of being unmerciful, although he never strives to please him, and boldly to say, that he could not have thought that God would have been so unmerciful. Such persons consider it incumbent upon the Almighty to regulate his dealings according to their wishes, but refuse to govern themselves so as to please him, and to pray and repent. It is particularly lamentable, that those who excite the tumults in this instance are the aged, who in every case had only a year to live, and then must die. For of the forty years allotted them, thirty-nine were expired. There was, therefore, only a short space remaining for repentance,

and yet they continue to accumulate sin ! Ah, why do not they pray with Moses, “ Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom ! ” Have we not even understanding enough to pray for understanding ? If the aged were so reprobate, what must the younger be ? And observe how arrogant they still are ; they call themselves “ the congregation of the Lord.” What is this but saying, “ I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; ” not knowing that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. They call themselves the congregation of the Lord, but he terms them a stiff-necked race. And tell me, is not the same perversion practised with reference to the christian name ? Every one assumes it with the utmost confidence, although he may be as unlike a Christian, as a raven differs from a swan ; aye, and many are even ashamed of the name, as soon as it is intended to convey any thing more than the name. They do not wish to believe what becomes a Christian to believe, or to do that which is becoming a Christian ; and yet desire to be regarded as good and worthy people. O how desperate is our wound, how incurable our disease ! “ the Lord alone can heal us.” Only afford a man, who is not born of God, the opportunity, and observe whether he keeps himself in such a manner as that the wicked one toucheth him not, (1 John v. 18.) and whether the meek-tempered man does not foam with rage, the honest man become a thief, and the merciful man a murderer, when the temptation presents itself. Alas for us, if we are such sinners, whilst destitute of Jesus as our Saviour !

However, there are happy exceptions, which are

doubly estimable on account of their rarity. Do you think that Joshua, Caleb, Eleazer, Phinehas, and many more, acted likewise in this improper manner? God forbid! Even in the midst of the greatest and most extensive apostacy, God has always his little flock. Otherwise we should also be like Sodom and Gomorrah. And thus the Lord has still always reason to say, "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Moses and Aaron are the two stars which glitter in the obscurity of the night, surrounded by many others of inferior magnitude. They depart from the congregation which, whilst acting thus, may indeed be termed a congregation, but not a congregation of the Lord, as they had called themselves. They separate themselves from them. And we are also told to come out from amongst those whose minds are evil and perverted; not to make ourselves partakers of other men's errors and sins, nor to follow the multitude to do evil, even though it consist of persons of respectability; and to distinguish ourselves so much the more decidedly, as of opposite sentiments. They hasten to the tabernacle, in which the throne of grace was erected, in order to invoke the mercy of God upon the sinful people, lest his anger should awake. They present their supplications with the profoundest reverence, and fall upon their faces. For when our souls are filled with devotion, the gestures of the body also express it.

They do not utter a word; for when the fervour of the feelings is too powerful, it swallows up the words, or suffers only single broken expressions to escape. They intercede; which was necessary in the present case. They stand in the breach, in order to turn away the Lord's anger; and it is a deplorable affair, when

doctrine and deportment decline, if the words of Ezekiel be verified, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I recompensed their own way upon their heads, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. xxii. 30, 31.)

"And the glory of the Lord appeared to them." This was the immediate consequence of their earnest prayer; for the latter availeth much. The glory of the Lord was, at that period, a particular sign of the divine presence, an unwonted radiance that showed itself, either upon the tabernacle, or at its door. This was the case at present. It appeared. In the New Testament dispensation, we no longer possess such symbols of the divine presence as these; for now every thing is spirit and life. But the Lord sometimes communicates himself to the praying soul in an unutterably tranquillizing, sanctifying, and beatific manner, in spirit and in truth; and this is of more value than the former.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses." He that formed the tongue, shall he not speak? and he that planted the ear, shall he not make himself audible to it? He gives a command by which the wants of the people are to be relieved. "Take the rod." This was probably not that rod with which Moses smote the Red Sea, and the rock in Horeb; for that miraculous rod, which, out of the hand of Moses, became a serpent, and afterwards again a rod in his hand, does not appear to have been laid up before the Lord in the tabernacle. But we know that this was the case with Aaron's rod, which budded, blossomed, and bore ripe

almonds in one night, (Numb. xvii.) by which he was confirmed in his priesthood, and ordained to bear the iniquity of the people. This propitiatory rod, this type of Christ, (according to Heb. ix. 4.) Moses was ordered to take out of the tabernacle. But why? Because it was the Lord's will. Who dares on all occasions to ask him for a reason? or, if asked, expect an answer, seeing that the inquirer himself would, probably, be unable to understand it.

Now this rod or staff of Aaron's typified how Christ, in virtue of his priesthood, should act as a wall of defence for his people, and stand in the breach against God, as well as be the source of every blessing to them; so that we are not punished according to our deserts, in which case we should receive fire instead of water. Is this a sufficient reply to thy question, "Why was he ordered to take the rod?" And why was it not, rather, omitted, in order to prevent the bad use which Moses made of it? Thy question leads thee to the brink of an abyss, into which thou canst not look down without becoming giddy. Therefore, cease thy inquiries; be a child, and be afraid. Do not press thyself presumptuously forward, but draw back, and say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!"

"Gather thou the assembly together," that they may see; even as the people at a later period assembled about the cross, which is always the centre of the church of God, who direct to it the eye of faith, in order to receive blessing from it.

"Speak ye unto the rock," not with the people. Eight-and-thirty years before he was commanded to strike the rock; but now he was merely to speak to

it. There lies, without doubt, a mystery in this different mode of acting, with which, however, I am unacquainted. The rock was Christ. We know why and how he was smitten; and, also, that he does not again require to be so; we are likewise well aware that he gives living water to every thirsty soul, which implores it of him by believing prayer: but what is implied in this rock being smitten a second time, contrary to the will of God, and still yielding so much water, I cannot unravel, and am ignorant of its signification. So much, however, is certain, that God is free, and does not bind himself to any particular method; but that we are bound to his method, and are not permitted to deviate from it at pleasure. If we do so, the consequences are injurious. Nor is God bound to any particular means, but can first use one, and then another, or even none at all, and employ means which seem to frustrate, rather than promote, the intended object. A striking means of this latter kind was the death of Jesus, which, according to human calculation, would have frustrated the entire object of his coming into the world, although it fulfilled it.

Moses, in the present instance, had to procure water from the rock, by addressing it. A more unsuitable and absurd procedure could not be thought of, had not God himself commanded it. Without the latter, Moses might have spoken, called, and cried himself to death, before the rock would have answered with a stream of water. However, if our senses were not so taken captive, and blunted by habit; and if we were desirous of ascertaining the connexion between cause and effect in every thing, as we are in some things,

should we not regard it as very absurd, for the husbandman to cast his seed into the humid earth; or for a vine-dresser to prune the luxuriant vine, in order to render it the more fruitful? We imagine ourselves very wise, but, in reality, we know extremely little or nothing; of which we may become conscious, if we carried our researches a little deeper, and did not generally rest satisfied with the surface.

This was the commission, "Speak unto the rock." And the promise attached to it was, "It shall give forth its water." The Lord himself engaged, that this should be the consequence of his singular address; and because God himself said it, that became credible, which otherwise would not have been so; and thus, also, the prophet Ezekiel boldly cried aloud to the dry bones, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!"

Moses, this servant who was found faithful in the whole house of God, appears equally obedient. He takes the rod out of the tabernacle, and with the help of Aaron, assembles the people before the rock. . . . Here I should be glad to break off, and, like Shem and Japhet, go backward, and throw a covering over the unseemly position of the worthy man, and turn away my eyes. In every case, let Ham's mockery be far from us, lest his curse should also befall us. If these things are done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? If heroes, accustomed to the battle, take to flight, what will novices do? If hoary oaks are overthrown, woe to the bruised reed!

But, although we hesitate, we must, nevertheless, proceed to view this glorious luminary in its eclipse. It begins within. This great man, whose faith is four times commended, in Heb. xi. as exemplary, begins to

doubt whether water will burst forth from the rock, especially by a means so absurd; he therefore does not, in this instance, tread in the steps of Abraham, who doubted not, but accounted him faithful who had promised, and that he was also able to perform. The man, who was otherwise so meek, and who so often humbled himself when the people sinned, now becomes angry with them, for which he had only too much cause. They invariably sought the wrong road; and who could endure such ■ continual dropping? But, alas! in his anger, he goes astray himself. He speaks; not, however, to the deaf and unfeeling rock; but to the people, to whom he ought to have said nothing. "Hear now, ye rebels!" said he. He had, indeed, cause for calling them so; but, whilst censuring him for acting thus, beware of practising the same thing, or even worse than that which thou blamest in others. Hear! sayest thou. O that thou didst hear thyself, and not preach to others, whilst thou art thyself a cast-away! Thou excitest the attention of others. Better would it have been, hadst thou continued unnoticed.

Moses puts a very improper question:—"Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" says he, whilst, in his own mind, he thinks, "No, we shall not be able!" He here manifests mistrust in the power, goodness, and word of God; *he* does it—a man of such authority and influence; he does it openly, before all the people, thus setting them a very bad example. For if he thinks it rational not to believe in this instance, but to doubt, what must the rest think? Woe to the world, because of offences, especially when they proceed from persons who ought to give, and have hitherto given, an example of an entirely opposite

nature! We ought to deplore it with tears of blood! What a display of divine displeasure, when such things are permitted!

He now lifts up his hand, smites the rock, strikes it twice, and lo! a torrent of water gushes out, and man and beast quench their thirst. Thus were Moses and Aaron openly put to shame, and humbled, before all the people, for the unbelief they had openly manifested. They were compelled to feel ashamed before the whole congregation, and the respect for them was considerably diminished. These great men were nothing but what they were by the grace of God, and as long as they were sustained by it. Their excellence was not the fruit of their own efforts, but of the Spirit, which was put upon them. He who honours them on account of their excellent qualities, will do well not to stop there, but elevate himself to the source of all good, and praise their father in heaven for the good works which he sees performed by them.

But these two great men, Moses and Aaron, did not escape on this occasion. As warriors of God, they had not fulfilled their duty, nor manifested the bravery which was incumbent upon them. They had abandoned the post appointed them, by a shameful flight, and had shown their backs instead of their breasts to the enemy. Though all had fled, they ought not to have done so. They ought to have maintained their ground. If all the people had said, "You cannot bring us water from the rock," they ought to have shown them the contrary, and have said, "We will, by the Lord's help." They ought to have sanctified the name of the Lord before all the people. They began well, but what does that avail, if they did

not persevere? He that is holy, let him be holy still. They had prayed, and now they ought to have believed. Seeing that they had such a cloud of witnesses around them, they ought to have laid aside the easily besetting sin, and run with patience the appointed race. But, because they did nothing of all this, they were brought before the divine tribunal, and both were sentenced to death. Aaron died at the very next place of encampment. Moses went forward to the banks of the Jordan, but did not pass over it, and died on Mount Nebo. He frequently presented a humble request, that the sentence might be annulled, and besought the Lord with particular urgency, when near the borders of Canaan, and said, "O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might. I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon!" But an answer was returned him in the negative. "Let it suffice thee," it was said to him, "speak no more unto me of this matter;" and thus it ended. We remember, however, what occurred fifteen hundred years later, on Tabor. Moses repeats it once more; "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and because he loved you so much, I was, therefore, obliged to bear it."

Moses could not conduct any one into Canaan, not even himself; this was reserved for another—for Joshua, (or Jesus,) the son of Mary. It was he, in a peculiar sense, with whom the Lord was wroth for our sakes; and because he loved us to such a

degree, he gave up his own Son, that we might live through him.

What shall we say, therefore, in conclusion? We say, "If these things are done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?" "Lord, if thou wilt impute sin, O Lord, who can stand!" "He that believeth on the Son, hath eternal life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "If he that broke the law of Moses, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Amen.

IV.

THE EMBASSY TO EDMOM.

NUMB. XX. 14—22.

“ And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom. Thus saith thy brother Israel, thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us ;

“ How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt ■ long time ; and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers ;

“ And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt ; and behold, we are in Kadesh a city in the uttermost of thy border.

“ Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country ; we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells ; we will go by the king’s high-way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

“ And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

“ And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high-way, and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it ; I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet.

“ And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.

“ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border ; wherefore Israel turned away from him.

“ And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto Mount Hor.”

WE find ourselves once more in Kadesh, where Miriam died, and Moses and Aaron sinned together with the people, and even in a more culpable manner than they. A third unpleasant event now occurs.

The children of Israel are travelling at present in a direct line towards Canaan. They have reached the land of Edom, in which the Edomites dwelt, who were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, and who therefore, originating from the same stock with the Jews, were related to them by blood. If the Israelites are permitted to pass through their country, the distance will be considerably shortened, say not less than from two hundred to two hundred and fifty miles. They therefore make application, in the most modest manner, for this permission. Moses sends an embassy thither, which reminds the Edomites of the oppression the children of Israel had suffered in Egypt, of which the former could not have remained ignorant. He merely solicits a passage through the country, with the promise not to take any thing in an arbitrary manner, and that they would gladly pay for every thing, even for the water which they might require. However, their application is not only refused in words, but the Edomites fly to arms, in order to receive Israel with the sword, in case the latter should venture to force a passage. The Israelites are therefore compelled to relinquish their purpose. They cannot pass through; they must turn back, and be content to make the mighty circuit. Poor Israel! how every thing seems to go against thee! All unite, and even those of thine own consanguinity, to render life bitter to thee. We might have supposed, that now it would have been said, "The Lord thy God hath taken

to heart thy journeyings through this vast wilderness ;” and yet such things befall thee !

We have already made a remark at Ezion Geber, respecting Edom and Moab ; but let us at present take the signification of the term into somewhat closer consideration.

Edom is a type, *first*, of all earthly-minded people ; that is, of all those whose supreme good is earthly possessions and sensible enjoyments. Esau, as is well known, sold his birthright to his brother Jacob, for a mess of red pottage. He despised his birthright with its privileges, as we read in Genesis xxv. 32, and said contemptuously, “ Behold, I am at the point to die ; and what profit shall this birthright do to me ?” But it was of great importance, since it was probable, though not certain, that from the first-born he would proceed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This was assuredly a great honour and a precious privilege. To renounce it for the sake of such a trifle as a mess of pottage, for the momentary satisfying of his bodily appetite, was disgraceful ; and the more so, because it is evident that a contempt of Christ, and of all that is good and excellent, lay at the foundation of it. “ I am at the point to die,” sayest thou, thoughtless Esau ? but if this had been the case, thou oughtest to have acted in a very different manner, and if thou art aware that thy birthright will not profit thee, thou oughtest to look about thee for that which would have been beneficial to thee. If thou hadst given thy brother Jacob a refusal, thou wouldst doubtless have caused him much joy, and he would most gladly have given thee the pottage which thou desiredst. He put thy sentiments to a little test,

and was astonished that thou wast so little able to stand it, as to esteem a trifle so highly, and a matter of such importance so meanly. Thy fondness for the chase and for husbandry had caused him to suspect, in some degree, thy sentiments with reference to God and godliness ; but he now learned, to his sorrow, how perverted was thy heart. However, it will not be long before thou wilt repent of thy thoughtlessness, but without avail. Thy brother will make use of the birthright which thou didst transfer over to him with so much levity, to his advantage and thy detriment, and thou wilt then weep and lament, but it will be too late, and in vain. Hence the Apostle presents him to us, in Heb. xv. 17, as a warning example, when he says, " Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest there be any fornicator or profane person, like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected ; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." And the end of all those who are earthly-minded, and whose god is their belly, is damnation.

Edom is also, *secondly*, a type of all self-righteous persons and mere moralists. As such they appear particularly in the book of Job, for the names and residences of the friends of this much-tried saint, point out that they were the descendants of Esau. They know not a syllable of Christ, to whom Job himself and Elihu also bear such a glorious testimony. They only know of a self-acquired right, by which they suppose Providence treats the children of men, and lets it go well or ill with them according to that standard. It went well

with them, and ill with Job; hence they deduced an inference very prejudicial to the godliness of Job, but very favourable to their own, although they were not worthy to do the most menial offices for him. They took care that Job should be in no want of admonitions and precepts; they pressed him down with them, so to speak, and provoked him to a number of improper speeches, so that he once broke out into the words, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. Would to God ye were in my place, then would I also assail you with words, and shake my head at you." They regarded themselves as wise, as Job also says of them. But respecting such, Solomon says, "there is more hope of a fool than of such a one." In other respects they were very honourable men, and any thing, in their own esteem, but poor sinners that stood in need of and hungered after grace. Though the moralists of the present day resemble them in the latter particular, yet, as it regards the former, they are generally far behind them. They say beautiful things, but do not practise them. These are dangerous characters, because, under a specious guise, they lead the soul away from Christ, of whom they almost entirely refuse to hear any thing. They speak of integrity and virtue; they recommend and praise them. They seek to persuade the individual that he has the power to carry his moral improvement to a great length, and requires nothing more for this purpose than the will to do so, and his good natural disposition. Forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, the new birth, the renovation of the heart by the Holy Spirit, faith in the Lord Jesus—in short, the whole gospel, is of no value to this kind of

people, who are clean in their own eyes, without being cleansed from their filthiness; and they even seek to depreciate it in a variety of ways.

For Edom is, *thirdly*, a type of anti-christianity in its inferior gradations, as also in its complete manifestation a short time before its destruction. Every possible hindrance has been laid in the way of true religion from its commencement, and from Abel to the present day. At different periods, the hatred of the serpent and its seed has broken out against it with great violence. They crucified Christ himself. All his Apostles, with the exception of John, died a violent death. Jews and heathens persecuted the Christians in a most barbarous manner, and an innumerable multitude were put to death. These persecutions were continued during the space of three whole centuries. They then ceased, or, more properly speaking, only changed their form, and became still more dangerous; for superstition and erroneous doctrine threatened to deprive the christian religion of the truth, which is its life and soul. If Israel formerly changed itself into a hostile Edom, degenerate Christianity did so in later times. For when traces of true knowledge and godliness were discovered in individuals or large bodies of persons, they only served as the signal for their being attacked with fire and sword.

Israel was unable to pass through the land, and was obliged to withdraw. And what do we experience in this respect at present? What an outcry is made about mysticism! And what is it that is thus sought to be rendered suspected? What expositions of Scripture, and even versions of the Bible! Do not, however, believe that the state of things will shortly

improve. O no! Believe me, if men do not receive the love of the truth in order that they may be saved, God will send them strong delusions, that they shall believe a lie. Then shall the man of sin and the child of perdition be revealed; then shall the two witnesses be slain, and as it is dreadfully expressed in Rev. xiii. 8, all that dwell upon the earth shall worship the dragon and the beast. Every thing will become much worse than is at present imagined, and the enemies of Christ, of his kingdom, and his truth, will succeed but too well; so that, according to the seventh verse, they shall not only make war with the saints, but even overcome them.

The result was, that Israel was obliged to retire. The same thing has repeatedly occurred in a religious respect, on a larger as well as smaller scale. I know not whether I ought here to mention the fact, that in modern times, not only the superficial religion planted in Siam, China, and Japan, by a notorious order of monks, has been not only entirely rooted out, but all access to those countries completely closed. The good seed, also, which Bishop Claude, of Turin, and subsequently, Peter Waldo, of Lyons, disseminated so widely, that all the way from hence to Rome, a person might lodge every night with a truly enlightened Christian, was, in the course of time, again entirely rooted up, according to all human appearance, by the Papists, and in particular by the Dominican order of monks and the Jesuits. In Spain alone, from the year 1481 to 1498, seventeen thousand individuals were burnt at the stake, and ninety-eight thousand sent to the galleys. A powerful barrier was also raised against the reformation effected by Luther, and it was re-expelled

from several countries where it seemed to have taken firm footing.

And thus it still continues frequently to be the case on a smaller scale. Godliness and the gospel often again depart entirely from a congregation or country where it had previously flourished in a very lovely manner. The pious die off, and their places are not re-occupied. Where formerly many were to be met with, none are any longer to be found. How often does a pleasing blossom manifest itself in individuals, and particularly in the young, and yet it falls off without yielding fruit. They glow with devotion for a season, but it is only like the transient blaze of a pile of straw, which expires whilst we are expecting it will begin properly to burn. How great is the wickedness of the devil, and the faithlessness of men ! But how dreadful also are the judgments of God !

The children of God may likewise be placed in such a situation as to be compelled to complain with Job, " He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths." The disciples calculated upon every day being more glorious, even as Mary Magdalen believed that this would be the case when she sank at Jesus' feet with the exclamation, " Rabboni !" and how unexpected was his reply, " Touch me not !" We cannot calculate with certainty upon any thing but upon God and his mercy in Christ Jesus. " Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," is the inference of faith which believes, although it does not see ; and even hopes against hope, as Paul says, in commending the faith of Abraham.

At length, however, the scene changes. God had

promised that the elder should serve the younger, and Esau became tributary to Jacob. But the time had not yet arrived. Several hundred years passed away before David said, in Psalm lx. "Moab is my wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe," which became entirely subject to him. However, it continued to recover itself, and in the days of Christ the sceptre had so far departed from Judah, that Herod, the Edomite, was king. But eventually the long wished for period shall dawn, for which Christ also directs us to pray, in which his kingdom shall come. It will then be asked, as in Isaiah lxiii. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save! Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-press? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." No Edom shall then be any longer able to interpose, and restrain the progress of the divine word; every hindrance shall then be removed out of the way, and the Lord's kingdom be extended rapidly, like an overrunning stream, impelled onward by a strong wind.

Until then we must patiently wait, and not be disheartened, if occasionally some good institution does not succeed, or another is given up, and elsewhere new hindrances present themselves. It may yet be worse; but at the last his counsel must triumph. The Lord

shall at length redeem us from all our distresses, and bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom.

The children of Israel now broke up from their encampment at Kadesh, and the whole congregation journeyed to Mount Hor.

V.

THE DEATH OF AARON.

NUMB. xxxiii. 37—39.

“ And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in Mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom.

“ And Aaron, the priest, went up into Mount Hor, at the commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month.

“ And Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in Mount Hor.”

THIS event is more fully related in Numb. xx. 23—29, where it is said, “ The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded, and they went up into Mount Hor

in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there, in the top of the mount; and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel."

The signification of the name of this encampment has nothing in it particularly remarkable. It lay high, and on that account was called Hor. Worthy of notice, however, is the event that occurred there—the death of another very eminent and distinguished individual, and this was Aaron, the first high priest, and elder brother of Moses. The cases of death were here extraordinarily numerous. Moses says, in Deut. ii. 14, "The space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord swore unto them. For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed." Luther expresses himself on this subject as follows: "How many eminent, great, and excellent men must there doubtless have been amongst the six hundred thousand who came forth out of Egypt, and died in the wilderness, whose shoes' latchet we would not have been worthy to unloose. There were amongst them the twelve princes of the twelve tribes, and particularly prince Nahasson, who stands in the sacred lineage of Christ, as stated in Matthew i. Likewise the seventy men, amongst whom the spirit of Moses was divided, especially Eldad and Medad, and many other great men. Now all these

had done much and suffered much, had seen many divine wonders, had assisted in erecting a beautiful tabernacle and instituting divine worship, were full of good works, and nevertheless, all fell short, and died in the desert. Where is the spirit so great and lofty which ought not to be humbled and broken by such an example of God's wonderful judgment? Hence it is well said, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." But what was the reason of all this? The Apostle informs us in Heb. iii. and iv. that it was in consequence of their unbelief, from whence their disobedience sprang. "Take heed, therefore, that ye fall not after the same example of unbelief; but let us rather fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."

But to return to Aaron. He was born in Egypt, a short time before the king's command went forth to destroy all the male children of the Israelites, and was therefore some years older than Moses. He had also some advantages over the latter. These consisted, first, in the gift of eloquence, which Moses did not naturally possess, even as he himself says unto the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." To which the Lord answered, "Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind, have not I, the Lord?" (Exod. iv. 10, 11.) and afterwards he repeatedly says, "I am of uncircumcised lips." But of Aaron, God says, "I know that he can speak well—he shall be unto thee instead of a mouth."

The other advantage which Aaron possessed was the high-priestly dignity, which was a very great one.

However, during the life-time of Moses, he was subordinate to him, even as the mouth is to the head ; so that the Lord said to Moses, "Thou shalt be to him instead of a God." Aaron also willingly acknowledged him, with one single exception, to be a much greater priest than himself, and as his lord. This alone sufficiently demonstrates the holiness of his character and sentiments. Selfish nature does not willingly concede privileges to others, which produce envy and ill-will. These evil fruits once manifested themselves in him, and drew down upon him, though not in his own person, but in that of his sister, a very severe, but salutary correction, so that the fault was never committed by him again. The esteeming another more highly than ourselves is a rule of life, the practice of which is often rendered difficult by the advantages possessed by others, which ought to facilitate it. It is, however, disgraceful and displeasing to God, when we yield to envy in any degree.

Aaron was of a much more gentle disposition than his brother, whose character was ardent and fiery. We frequently read of Moses, that he was very angry, not however in a sinful, but very holy manner ; the first time at the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, from whose presence he went out in great wrath, after such a highly majestic address as no one else ever uttered. The second time, he was enraged at the idolatry of the Israelites, and hurled the two tables of the law out of his hand, so that they were broken. But Aaron never fell into such a wrathful temper. Moses, however, was also, as it respects his own affairs, the most tried of men ; whilst his brother, on the contrary, was too yielding, where he ought to have been firm. Every natural dis-

position can be sanctified unto the Lord, and rendered serviceable ; and each brings with it its peculiar temptations ; the one appears more amiable, the other more imposing. Every thing depends upon its being consecrated, and subjected to the Lord. But because Aaron, in his priesthood, was intended to be a type of Christ, it is pleasing, even in the type, to perceive the glimmerings of that meekness, compassion, and mercy, which beam in full splendour in the antitype.

Aaron attained to the age of an hundred and twenty-three years. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Aaron necessarily died, as did likewise Jesus Christ, the real high priest, but in an entirely different manner—that is, a violent death, and that for our sins ; for “ in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Heb. vii. 23—25.)

The manner of Aaron’s death was peculiar. God calls it a being gathered to his people. Aaron’s real people and country was, therefore, not on earth, but elsewhere—in heaven. Thither he belonged, and there he longed to be : the things above were the objects of his efforts ; he desired to be made meet for them, and to them he was now to be gathered. Thus a goodly heritage was allotted him. In the enjoyment of health and strength, and well aware for what purpose he was called to ascend Mount Hor, he proceeded to its sum-

mit. His brother Moses and his son Eleazar accompanied him ; and thus attended the funeral of a living person. The people looked after them, and saw Aaron for the last time. He wore his priestly vestments. We are not informed whether they conversed with each other on the way, or were silent. If the former was the case, we may easily imagine what was the subject.

The obedience and willingness which Aaron manifested in ascending the hill, proves, at the same time, his faith, from whence his resignation originated. He was also one of those who by faith looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, wherefore God also was not ashamed to be called his God.

The being gathered to his people conveyed nothing but what was consolatory to him ; and he who commanded him to ascend the mount, gave him also courage, strength, and cheerfulness to do so. If he was accompanied by Moses, or the law, which only kills, and preaches condemnation, he was also attended by Eleazar, *the priest*, who preaches righteousness and life.

With what ideas and feelings, in all probability, did the people look after these three eminent men ; and with similar sentiments ought we to contemplate this last act of Aaron's, especially when we remember, at the same time, the painful path of the true high priest up the Mount of Olives and Calvary ; and call to mind how we also must eventually perform our last act, and leave this world. Happy shall we then be, if we possess that love which never faileth.

Arrived at the summit of the mountain, Moses divested his brother of his sacred vestments ; even as we,

in order to become partakers of the true righteousness, must be stripped of all our own righteousness. The priestly attire was put upon Eleazar, and with it the priestly office was conferred, and thus it passed from one to another, until it came to the true High Priest, of whom it is said, "Thou art a priest for ever." Aaron now laid himself down on the earth. The Lord received his spirit, and Moses and Eleazar buried him there; but the people mourned for him thirty days.

The narrative is striking. I will not forestall your further observations upon it, but conclude with the words of Peter (2 Ep. iii. 11, &c.) "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless, and account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and for ever! Amen."

VI.

THE VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES.

NUMB. xxi. 1—3.

“ And when king Arad, the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies, then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.

“ And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, ‘ If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then will I utterly destroy their cities.’

“ And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities : and he called the name of the place Hormah.”

THE children of Israel, as we already know, were obliged to turn back, because Edom and Moab denied them a passage through their territories. But now it was to be demonstrated whether their submission in this instance and their retreat, was a matter of complete necessity, or whether they would not have been strong enough of themselves to force a passage, and teach the Edomites a different lesson. At the same time, the Israelites were also to learn, from a little trial they had to endure, to whom they were indebted for the whole of their victories.

Let us therefore consider, *first*, the attack sustained,

and the victory achieved by the children of Israel ; and *then* the new place of encampment.

The Canaanitish king, who, on account of his brutality and violence, was justly called "arad," or wild ass, received intelligence that they were marching towards Canaan ; and because his territories lay between them and that country, he was apprehensive that he would be the first upon whom they would fall. This, however, was not the case, for they made such a circuit westward, as brought them through Jordan into the promised land. Arad, who had not forgotten the suspicious affair with the spies, who had searched out the land thirty-nine years before, now took the same method to fall upon them by surprise, which they had adopted to spy out the land ; and he regulated his attack so well, that he made some prisoners and carried them off with him.

The reason why God permitted this is evident. It was for the very same object that Paul was visited in Asia with such an immoderate measure of tribulation ; in order that he might not trust in himself, but in him who is able to raise the dead. They were to be convinced before-hand, and by experience, that they were not able to overcome the Canaanites by their own strength, but solely by the help of God, and that they must therefore trust to him, and not to themselves. And this is also an universal rule for the soldiers of Jesus Christ who wish to be successful in the spiritual conflict.

Thirty-nine years before, they had had to do with the very same people. But at that time they acted on the offensive, and likewise suffered a defeat ; for they were beaten back as far as Hormah. It was at

the time when the spies, who had been sent out, returned from the land of Canaan; two, indeed, with very costly fruits, but ten with a very discouraging account, and with the declaration that it was impossible to subdue the land. In consequence of this, the congregation murmured, and would have stoned Moses. They wished to return to Egypt. At this crisis the Lord interfered. He said, You wish to return to Egypt; turn back, therefore, from the borders of Canaan towards the Red Sea! Ye have taken forty days to spy out the land! They shall be forty years unto you, during which ye shall wander in the wilderness, before ye enter the land. You say, that your children will perish; they shall not do so; they shall enter Canaan, but ye shall all die in the desert, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua. And now turn back. Forty years shall you bear your iniquities in the wilderness, and ye shall know what it is for me to withdraw my hand. And the men who brought up an evil report upon the land, died first by the plague before the Lord.

The congregation mourned deeply on this occasion; but their mourning soon transformed itself into obstinate presumption. If the day before they were in despair, they are now bold, presumptuous, and self-confident. But the one is as displeasing to God as the other. What they yesterday regarded as impossible, they look upon to-day as an easy matter. They will go up into the mountain, in opposition to the word of the Lord, and by their own strength and prowess take possession of the promised land. Notwithstanding the warning advice given them by Moses, notwithstanding that neither he, nor the ark, nor the pillar of cloud went with them, they marched out. But what was the

consequence? They were smitten and discomfited, even unto Hormah.

They then wept before the Lord; but he would not hearken to their voice, nor give ear unto them. (Deut. i. 45.) A certain author observes upon this, that “ This is one of the cases, at which reason may greatly stumble. What shall we do? they might think. If we say we will return, it is sin; or if we go forwards, it is also wrong. In like manner the Jews, in the time of Isaiah, may have thought—if we neglect to offer sacrifice, it is sin; but if we bring our oblations, the prophet again makes it out to be sinful. And thus, in the time of Christ, the sacrifices, fastings, and prayers of the pharisees was sin; but if they omitted them, they also sinned. When Esau took two wives of the Hittites, it displeased God and his parents, and when he went and married a daughter of Ishmael’s, and consequently a grand-daughter of Abraham, he still remained a reprobate. Who, therefore, can act so as exactly to please a holy God? Who is able to stand in his sight? Certainly, my friend, as long as thou goest about with the works of the law, thou wilt be unable to do so. The law has concluded all under sin. Therefore, do what thou wilt, it is sin. Turn whither thou wilt, the wrath of God will fall upon thee, and the curse of the law overtake thee. But what saith the Scripture? ‘ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; he that believeth is justified. Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. This is the will of him that sent him, that whosoever believeth on him should have eternal life.’ The Scripture says, again: ‘ He hath told thee, O man! what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and

to walk humbly with thy God.' This, therefore, is the way to peace.* It is not any particular outward work which is acceptable to God, but faith; and with this faith, we walk in humility and love, and are then able to perform works acceptable to God. Thus the children of Israel ought to have entered into the land of Canaan confiding in their God, notwithstanding all the terrors which the spies sought to infuse into them, and thus have followed the steps of faithful Abraham. But after having once sinned through unbelief, and even committed a sin unto death, they ought to have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, endured his correction, and renouncing the earthly Canaan, have contented themselves with his favour, as Moses was afterwards compelled to do."

Their conduct was this time very different. They were not presumptuous. They did not trust in themselves, but applied themselves to prayer. "Lord," said they, "if thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand!" They expected the victory, not from themselves, but from the Lord; and placed their confidence, not in themselves, but in him. They did not seek their own advantage, but vowed to the Lord, that they would utterly destroy the cities which they might conquer; the expression implies not only a destruction, but an entire dedication to the Lord, an engagement to retain nothing for their own use, but to renounce all claim to it, and never to resume the right. In this latter sense ought every one to resign himself to the Lord with body and soul, in life and in death, for time and eternity, with the entire renunciation of his own will and of all self-seeking, and always to persevere in these sentiments. We must not live to ourselves, but

to Christ. We ought to become nothing, that he may be all in us.

If their conduct was, on this occasion, the very reverse of what it had been thirty-nine years before, the result was also very different. The Canaanites were overcome, their cities were destroyed, and if Israel then experienced how little was to be accomplished without the Lord, they now experienced what they were able to effect through him, without any strength of their own. They called the place where they had gained the victory, once more Hormah, even as they had done thirty-nine years before; but now in a very different sense. What they had then suffered, they now inflicted. At that time they were vanquished; now they prevailed. Therefore, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me!" Israel goes out of thy way, O Edom! be not high-minded on that account, as though thou couldst have hindered him. He is able to force a passage, and to break thee, like a dry twig is broken across the knee, and will do so as soon as his hour is come. And thou, Israel, be not high-minded, nor ever despond. The very thing which deeply grieves thee now, may subsequently be to thee an occasion of great joy and thanksgiving, even as David, in the same breath, says himself, "Why art thou cast down?" and, "thou shalt yet praise him." Israel can sustain a defeat in mercy, as well as gain a victory; and Paul is a favourite of the Lord's, when moaning under the buffetings of Satan's messenger, as well as when caught up into the third heaven. Must not

all things work together for good to them that love God?

But observe how, in the third verse, all the glory is exclusively ascribed to God alone. "The Lord," it is said, "hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites, and utterly destroyed them and their cities; and he called the name of the place Hormah, which means destruction." How remarkable! He did all this to such a degree, as even to give the name to the place. Where is human boasting then? O that we also might soon arrive at Hormah, in a three-fold sense! First, by presenting ourselves wholly unto God as a living thank-offering; nay, even as a sacrifice already slain. Secondly, that every Arad, all power that exalteth itself against the Lord, together with all the works of the devil, and every thing which militates against his word, may be destroyed. And, thirdly, that all ungodliness within us may be annihilated. Let us, however, wait, pray, and believe, and in due time he will rapidly accomplish every thing.

The term Canaanite, implies a tradesman, or merchant; and when it is said, at the close of the prophecy of Zechariah, "In that day shall the Lord be king over all the earth, and there shall be one Lord, and his name one," (chap. xiv. 9); and, in verse 11, there shall be no Herem or Hormah, utter destruction; it may also be translated, "there shall be no more Canaanites, or tradesmen;" that is, no false religion. For all false religions teach a meritoriousness of works, as the procuring cause of salvation; whilst, on the contrary, true religion teaches salvation from pure

grace, without the merit of works, through faith, which is the gift of God—a religion which can only be true for those who feel their sinfulness, and is alone able to bring us into fellowship with God. The former seeks to derive every thing from itself; but the latter expects every thing from him, who is full of grace and truth; who is represented to us under a singular, but very instructive figure—as crucified in this wilderness, in the thirty-fourth encampment, called

ZALMONAH.

This place lay at the distance of about thirty-five miles from the previous encampment; and the children of Israel reached it by a circuitous route of a hundred miles from Kadesh, by way of Mount Hor, on the borders of Moab, whilst, on the straight road from Kadesh to Zalmonah, they would not have had to travel half the distance. The ways of God, by which he leads us to the desired aim, often seem crooked, although, in reality, they are straight. Hence they frequently appear wonderful. But at length his exalted counsel triumphs.

The signification of the name of this encampment may be a matter of the greater indifference to us, since the event which happened there is so fully related; an event which is so important, that Jesus himself alludes to it, and says, that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must he, the Son of man, be lifted up.” The meaning of the word Zalmonah, is a definite figure, or shadow, and the occurrence itself is thus related to us in Numb. xxi. 4—6. “And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red

Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light food. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." In these words we have a new sin, new correction, and a new deliverance, by the strangest possible means.

A new sin. Let us first consider the occasion of it. We know that Israel was compelled, by the Edomites, to make a retrograde movement, and a circuitous path. They passed along the borders of Edom in a curved direction, round the bristly Mount Seir, towards the Red Sea, for the fourth time. It seemed just as if it was not intended that they should advance further. The people now grew tired and weary of the thing. The way was long, and the soul of the people *short*, according to the original expression; and these two did not agree together. But what shall we say to it? Place yourselves for once in their situation. To be wandering about for nearly forty years in such a horrible desert; to be obliged to spend twice as many years on a journey, as it would have taken days to accomplish, if they had been permitted to take the regular and beaten path through the country of the Philistines. Why did not God permit them to do so? Why did he not fulfil his promise in the most direct and least painful manner, if there was a necessity for its being painful? We certainly know the reason of this, from Deut. viii., and hold our peace. But

could not God, who is the author of all that is good, have attained this object, by other and kinder methods, if he had only been willing to employ them? In order that Paul might be preserved from self-exaltation, could not the Lord have himself accomplished it, without the intervention of a messenger of Satan? Or if not, why did not the Lord, at the urgent entreaty of his servant, make use of a more gentle means? Because he *would* not, is the reply. Our self-will must, therefore, entirely perish, although it is a painful operation. My intention is not to defend the conduct of the children of Israel, but to point out what little cause we have to esteem ourselves better, and deserving of a more lenient treatment than they, but rather of a similar punishment. He that is not faithful in that which is least, is unfaithful in that which is greatest; he who, in any case, murmurs, even a little, may do so in the most improper manner; he that is capable of an unchaste thought, is also capable of the most abominable act, and so of every thing else.

The circuitous route, and the retrograde movement, were, therefore, the cause, and discontent the effect. They were tired and disgusted at being obliged to travel about in such a manner, and at the whole affair. Such is the aspect of the heart and mind, where sin and lust have their seat, their root, and their scene of action, from whence the individual is excited and allured. If it conceives, by the consent and approbation of the will, it brings forth the evil deed. The ocean begins to roar in its deep caverns, and its smooth surface is soon changed into mountainous billows. Such was also here the case. The inward

murmurs soon manifested themselves outwardly. The sin which lurks in man is able, by means of its magic power, to make itself master of the understanding, and darken it; to overpower the will, and set the passions in an uproar; and then all is over. Eruptions follow, as lightning does the thunder, and flame the smoke. Therefore, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" that only that which is good may proceed forth from the good treasure!

O, what a lamentable sight it is, to see mankind breaking out into sin! The murmuring Israelites broke their hollow silence, and opened their mouths to aggravate their sin. They speak; but not as they ought. They speak, to use their tongues against some one, and against whom? Alas! against God himself. O Israel, what will become of thee, since thou art thyself making thy Creator and benefactor thy enemy! Does thy impatience, do your evil desires stupify you so entirely, that you no longer reflect who it is you assail? What will, what must, at length, become of you, if you make God your enemy? Rather let every creature be so than he. And this you do not consider, because sin has deprived you of your right understanding! O unhappy men, what will become of you! If it be dangerous to strive against a powerful man, how much more dangerous against the Omnipotent himself! Let every one entirely desist from such a thing. It is remarkable what Paul says, in reference to this, in 1 Cor. x. 9, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents." We are here told, that it was, in reality, Christ, whom they thus reproached. He was the angel who guided them; it was he at whom

every type pointed; he is also all to us. What can be more injurious than that which leads us away from him, whatever be the cause of our deviation, since it leads us astray from the truth and the life? This tempting of Christ consisted in their being so impatient as to refuse to wait the proper time, and to go the right way, by which he chose to guide them. He, however, who desires to travel to the promised land, must not suffer himself to be terrified and wearied, either by the length or the difficulty of the way. The path of life has also its sufferings. The nearer way, which only required about twenty days, is more dangerous; the other, which, by the people's own fault, lasted forty years, more fatiguing. Either the one or the other must be overcome, if we expect ever to enter into divine rest. Therefore, let us proceed boldly and unweariedly forwards; the breaker is gone up before us.

Moses was again obliged to sustain the assault. O, how serviceable to this great prophet and servant of God was his meekness! for this was now the eighth time that they murmured against him, as if he, and not they themselves, were to blame for what they suffered. How could they say, there is no water here, although the rock so richly supplied them with the most excellent water? or are they dissatisfied because it does not spring in the customary manner out of the earth? How true is the saying of the wise Sirach, that a single evil hour causes a man to forget many good ones! In consequence of a single inconvenience, many forget, not only how much greater it might be, and really is, in the case of many, but also all the good and all the advantages they possess, even in

preference to others who, if not better, are still as good as themselves. Wait a little longer with your complaints and accusations. Something still worse and more intolerable is probably on the way. Forget not your thanks, lest your benefactor be tired of you, and bestow less upon you, or even put a stop to his benefits.

If they were dissatisfied with the water, they were no less so with the manna. "Our soul loatheth this light food," say they. I confess I know not whether the Book of Wisdom is correct, when it states that the manna tasted as every one wished; nor do I believe it; but it is certain that it had a taste like flour mixed with honey, and besides this, might be boiled or baked, as the Scriptures inform us. But even this angel's food did not suit them. They threw it down at the Lord's feet, so to speak. But if that had been all, it might have been passed over. We, however, know whom the manna typified and represented. It was not the true and proper manna. It preserved the life of no one. But when the true manna came, how was it received? Did they not tread it wholly under foot, and do they not, in their hardened state, continue to do so to this hour?

How sweet and lovely is the gospel! Not only the fathers of the Old Testament, but even the holy angels, desire to look into its mysteries! But do not those who are called Christians begin to be disgusted with it, and is it not also called light, mean, and even dangerous food? The husky bread of human reason becomes increasingly beloved and universal, although men eat death from it, and even eternal death.

This did not pass unpunished. As long as we live

at variance with God, we cannot reckon upon anything good from the creature, but each will rejoice at being an instrument of divine wrath against us. Whilst they were in Goshen, neither the hail, the darkness, the lice, the frogs, the locusts, nor the destroying angel, came near them. But now, when acting wickedly, poisonous serpents are able to find them. Even the stones in the field desire no alliance with us, unless we are in alliance with God.

Be ye therefore reconciled unto God, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Obey the injunction which says, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." Amen.

VII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

NUMB. xxi. 6—9.

“ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.

“ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee ; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

“ And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every man that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

“ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

CHRIST is depicted to us in the Old Testament under a variety of remarkable types and figures. In Genesis, Isaac in particular is a type of Christ, especially in the voluntary yielding up of himself to death, as also in his resurrection, and even in his name, respecting which his mother said, “ God hath made me to laugh.” (Gen. xxi. 6.) In Exodus it is the paschal lamb, which is the most striking type of Christ, of which Paul says, “ Christ our passover is slain for us.” In

this type, the saving efficacy of its blood is to be particularly noticed, and in Christ we have the redemption through his blood. In Leviticus, it is chiefly the goat, by the slaying of which the atonement was made for the people. But no where do the types of Christ accumulate in such a manner as during the journey of the children of Israel. The pillar of cloud and of fire, Moses, Aaron, the tabernacle, the food which nourished them, the water they drank, the rock which gave it them, together with many other things, were types of Christ. In the Book of Numbers, it is especially the brazen serpent which prefigures him.

God is able to arm all creation against the transgressors of his commands. Horrible serpents, in the present instance, became the instruments of his justice, and the dreadful scourges with which the murmuring Israelites were punished for their rebellion. These abominable creatures are called seraphim, or fiery, a name also given to the holy angels seen by Isaiah, and who were called so, because they glowed and burned, as it were, with zeal for the glory of God, and therefore exclaimed, "Holy! holy! holy!" with so loud a voice, that the very pillars of the temple shook. But the serpents bore this appellation, not only because they looked like fiery coals, glowed with fury, darted up and down like red and blue flames, with dreadful rapidity, in the camp, and attacked and bit the people before they were aware, but also because they were the bearers of a poison, which, introduced into the human body by means of their bite, burned like fire, and in a short time infallibly proved fatal.

These horrible creatures crept about in the camp, quick as lightning, destructive as flames of fire. Be-

fore the individual was aware, he was bitten, and died a dreadful death. What was now to be done? Where was help to be sought for? Ought they to flee? Whither should they go? Ought they to attack the serpents, and destroy them? The latter darted upon them like an arrow from the bow, and had inflicted a mortal wound before they could lift a hand in their defence. Besides this, it was not possible to meet with any natural remedy against the effects of such a poisonous bite. Every outlet was closed, all refuge cut off, and no means of deliverance imaginable. Wherever they sought to hide themselves, the serpents found easy admission.

Dreadful and horribly distressing must have been their situation. Heaps of corpses were to be met with in every direction, whose distorted appearance evidenced the unnatural death they had died. In one place was a number of such as had been bitten, who perceived, by the fire that ran through their veins, the ever increasing trepidation and oppression, and their intolerable thirst, how near a similar end awaited them. Others were already lying on the ground, struggling horribly with death. And those who were still uninjured, were under mortal apprehension, being not a moment secure, nor capable of feeling themselves so. More terrible distress has perhaps never been experienced, than at that period in the camp of Israel.

But let us duly impress it upon our minds, that this happened to them, as the Apostle says, for an example. Let us remember, and take it well to heart, that we, even we ourselves have been bitten by serpents of a much worse description. For that dreadful old serpent, the devil, has been able to infect us with his sinful

poison of rebellion against God, a poison which by nature runs in all our veins, produces the most dangerous effects, and eventually causes eternal death. If any one is inclined to regard himself, in this respect, as only slightly and inconsiderably wounded, let him know and duly consider, that a slight bite of a poisonous serpent, even if it be only like a little scratch of a pin, is just as fatal as that by which a gaping wound is inflicted; and let him also remember, that this scratch or wound may become worse, instead of better, by neglect.

Look at the terrified children of Israel. How astonished do they appear, how disturbed and full of anxiety they are, how they hasten hither and thither, whilst some do not venture to move, nor others to stand still; they are almost in a state of desperation; they sigh, weep, and cry. Such is also the picture presented of what is customary at the commencement of repentance, when the individual attains to the knowledge and consciousness of his sin and misery. What distress pervades his mind; how broken is his heart; how weak his courage; how ignorant what to do! and he wanders about as on the brink of the abyss of despair. The rustling of a leaf scares him; he is much afraid, lest, though others may find mercy, there should be none for him, and lest neither God nor man should be able to help him. He is even afraid of losing his senses, and of being suddenly swept away. Look at Paul, look at the Philippian jailer, thus trembling and quaking. Though this may not always be the case, and though it may not be necessary in every individual instance, yet this is the customary process.

Whoever thinks lightly of his sins, may rest assured that he is not walking upon the proper path.

But happy is he whose sins, during the present life, become too heavy a burden for him ; not, however, as they were to Judas, but as David felt them ! But woe unto him whose sins the Lord retains, in order afterwards to let them fall upon him like furious serpents, when death has once fixed an impassable gulf betwixt him and grace. “Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, upon every soul of man that doeth evil ; but glory, honour, and immortality to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for eternal life.”

What means, therefore, were to be resorted to in this extremity to repel the serpents ? The horror of their situation reached its summit, in consequence of the utter absence of every means of help, and the whole congregation saw nothing before them but certain death in a short space of time. Our spiritual situation with reference to sin and its punishment is just as desperate. In ourselves, a remedy can as little be found for the one as the other. What shall a man give in order to deliver his soul ? For the redemption of a man’s soul is too precious, so that he must cease from it for ever. It is impossible for the law to do it ; nay, it even preaches condemnation to us, it stirreth up wrath, it slays, instead of making alive. Whither then shall we flee ? To God ? He is a consuming fire.

Ah ! what would have become of the children of Israel, had they not possessed a Moses ? What would have become of us had we had no Jesus ? Both are

mediators, days-men between God and man; the former as the type, the latter as the substance; the former for a period, the latter for ever. How much in earnest were they now in seeking for Moses, whom hitherto, and just before, they had so ill-treated! How precious can that Jesus become to people, who still think that they ought to do much against his name, and who still believe they have no need of him! O that it might soon be the case with many!

They hasten to Moses. They confess their sins against God and against him. They beseech him to intercede, which he had so often done unasked. And Moses does not rebuke them nor reject them. He prays for them; and as was always the case, his prayers are heard, in the present instance also; but in what a singular manner!

God could have sent help in a variety of ways. He could have given an impulse to the serpents to retire from the camp, and again betake themselves to some morass to which they usually resorted; he could have deprived them of their poison, or have taken away the incitement to bite, or have directed the children of Israel to another encampment, or have sent, as he formerly did the quails, a host of storks into the camp, these natural enemies to serpents, which Moses himself is said to have employed in his younger years, in a war against the Ethiopians, as the Jewish historian, Josephus, informs us, and thus have expelled the serpents, who are afraid of them. But there was nothing of the kind. As we are now saved by the foolishness of preaching, if we believe what we hear, so the Israelites were delivered by a seemingly very foolish means.

Moses received orders to make a serpent of copper, and to elevate it on a lofty pole, with the promise that whoever was bitten and looked at it, should live. Moses obeyed : and when a serpent bit any one, he looked at the brazen serpent, and was actually restored. What a remarkable remedy ! A dead serpent, made of copper, heals, on being looked upon, the fatal bite of living serpents ! How can such a thing be ? Where is the connection here between cause and effect ? There is none. Is there, by possibility, a virtue in the copper against the bite of poisonous reptiles ? Just the reverse. It is said only to render it worse. And why should the figure be that of such an abominable, poisonous, and accursed animal as the serpent ? Had it been a lamb, a dove, or something of that nature, it would have seemed more in character. But the sight of a serpent was more calculated to deter than to excite a person to look at it. The similarity between the copper and the real serpent was almost too great. The former reminded the people too vividly of the latter, the remedy of the disease, and it could scarcely be looked upon without a violent shudder. This is all true. But he who did not suffer this to prevent him from beholding it, continued alive ; whilst he, who, from these or other reasons, neglected to do so, either because he was displeased with the remedy, or because he regarded his danger either as too small or too great, or because he would first understand how the looking at a copper serpent could heal the bite of a living one, perished, even if he had received only a slight scratch from a serpent's tooth ; whilst, on the contrary, even those were preserved who looked upon it, however dreadfully

they had been bitten, however near death they were, however much the entire effects of the poison had manifested themselves; and although they were repeatedly bitten, and from weakness could only cast a faint look, yet they recovered.

What kind of an aspect must the Israelitish camp have presented? Those were in the most dangerous situation, who had been so imperceptibly bitten by a serpent that they believed they were not at all injured, and needed no remedy, since not only a deep wound, but even the slightest scratch, infallibly caused death. Many were dead already; others were nearly so, and could scarcely look up with their half-closed eyes to the serpent; some had scarcely fixed their eyes upon it, when a fresh bite of a serpent compelled them to do so again; others looked up with all boldness to the brazen serpent, with a degree of contempt on the poisonous reptiles that were creeping about them; whilst others did so with timidity, and sought to preserve themselves from being bitten afresh; but no one suffered himself to be bitten from mere fool-hardiness.

It was certainly not the brazen serpent which healed the dying Israelites, but God, by its means. It was afterwards preserved during the space of seven hundred years, as it well deserved. But when the children of Israel practised idolatry with it, it was destroyed by king Hezekiah. How inclined men are to pervert every thing, and rob God of his glory, in order to appropriate it either to themselves or the creature!

The Lord, therefore, thus delivered them out of this great distress. But is this all, or is this event intended to teach us something in addition? Most assuredly it is. The very name of the encampment points to it, for

Zalmonah means a moving image or type. It is a type which, if we move it, and refer it to something else, we find the thing it was intended to signify. Thus it is with the manna, with the water-yielding rock, and thus, also, with the brazen serpent.

But we have no occasion to search and reflect for any long time, nor to exert our ingenuity in order to find out that which is typified by this event. If we read the gospel of John, we shall find that Jesus himself says, in the 14th and 15th verses of the third chapter, that "Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The Lord here tells us, that he must be thus elevated, even as the serpent was elevated by Moses, to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish on account of the poison of sin with which the old serpent has infected him, but have eternal life. In order to effect this, it was necessary that the former should take place. In order to prevent us all from perishing, it was necessary that Christ should be lifted up, in a similar manner to the serpent, upon the cross; and in this respect, Christ hanging on the accursed tree, could not be more appropriately prefigured than by the accursed creature the serpent. But let us compare the type and the thing typified a little more closely.

If we look at the serpent generally, we chiefly find a two-fold similarity between it and Christ. First, the serpent, as we see from Gen. iii. 14, is deprived of its original excellency, and from a very superior creature, has become an abominable reptile. Christ, during the whole of his sojourn on earth, was deprived of the

original glory which he had with his Father before the foundations of the world were laid ; but was never stripped of all his glory to such a degree as when he hung upon the cross. Not the smallest glimmer of it was then visible in him. He was a worm, and no man, and so despised that men hid their faces from him, yea, even spat in his presence, as a mark of their supreme contempt. He was despised and rejected of men. The second point of comparison is, that the serpent was accursed ; and, though it sounds harshly, yet Christ hung as one who is accursed on the cross, even as it is written, " Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Yes, he became a curse for us, in order that he might redeem us from the curse, and purchase for us the promised blessing.

Other points of resemblance may also be traced between the brazen serpent and Christ. The former presented the appearance of the destructive serpent, and bore its name. Christ was not only found in the likeness of sinful flesh, but was also made sin, or a sin-offering unto God. Our old man was elevated with and in him on the cross. The brazen serpent possessed none of the poison of the living ones. Christ was destitute of all the poison of sin, and there was no deceit in his mouth, even as little as the mouth of the brazen serpent contained a poisonous tooth. It was of copper or brass, the same metal of which the laver and other holy vessels in the temple were made, and is a figure of the holiness of Christ, by which he sanctified himself for us, that we might also be sanctified by the truth. The fiery appearance of this metal is a figure of the fiery zeal for the house of God which consumed him, and of his love, which impelled him to yield him-

self up unto death. The serpent was a lifeless one, and represents to us him who died for our sins, whose death is our life, who died to take away the sins of many, who died in order that pointing to him, we may ask, "Who is he that condemneth?" who died, and we with him, in order that the body of sin in us might be destroyed, and that we might no longer serve sin. It was lifted up. Christ was lifted up on the cross, and then upon the throne, and is still lifted up continually by the preaching of the cross, though it be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. God has caused the word of reconciliation to be preached amongst us, which calls forth the thanksgivings of believers, who become conscious that they who wait for him shall never be confounded. The cause of the elevation of both was sin and its bitter consequences; the intention, to afford a remedy which should be perfectly commensurate with its object, held up, however, not to reason, but to faith.

This brazen serpent had only to be looked upon by those who were bitten in order to their recovery. If they were bitten afresh, they had no need of any other remedy, nor to act in any different manner. If they practised this, their lives were preserved, however dreadfully they might have been bitten by the serpents; whilst those necessarily died who, from whatever motive, neglected to look up to the brazen serpent.

Now all this shadows forth, both the work of salvation by Christ's death on the cross, and the way and manner in which we become partakers of the salvation thus purchased for us by the crucified Saviour; "that whosoever believeth on me," says Jesus, "should not perish, but have eternal life." As the brazen serpent

typified Christ, so the looking up to it represented faith. As by the latter the destructive effects of the poison were obviated, so by the exercise of faith we are saved from perishing; and as the Israelites, by looking up to the brazen serpent, preserved their temporal existence, so each one attains, through faith, unto eternal life. He, therefore, who understands how to believe, is secure; whilst he who cannot believe, must perish, both as it respects soul and body.

If the sight of the brazen serpent, by its silently reminding the beholder of the poisonous living serpent, had something horrifying in it, so we cannot look at the cross of Christ without being reminded of the amazing depth of our misery, and the greatness of our guilt, which could only be removed by such an extraordinary means. Whilst this look exalts us, it humbles us, at the same time, most profoundly. From this brazen serpent, thus lifted up, emanated health and recovery. The Israelites required and possessed no other remedy; every other would have been as useless and needless as culpable. And is it not so with regard to Christ crucified? There is salvation in no other. All that were bitten might be healed, and we are empowered to proclaim, that all sinners may be saved, however abominable, great, manifold, and numerous their sins may be; and to announce, that no one need despair of the possibility of his recovery on this account. There is only one sin which cannot be forgiven, and that is a sin, the commission of which is now perhaps impossible. What joyful intelligence! No one was really healed but he who, regarding himself as having been actually bitten, believed that it would cause his death, and therefore looked up to the brazen serpent.

He only who acknowledges his sin and misery, who regards himself as lost, who takes refuge with Jesus, and believes on him, is justified, sanctified, and saved ; and every one who does not act in this manner, is irrecoverably lost. If any one is impenitent, so that he will not desist from his sins ; if any one is self-righteous, so that he will not acknowledge them ; if any one is strong in his own conceit, so as to wish to help and heal himself ; if any one is unbelieving, so that he will not turn unto Jesus ; such a one is condemned already, were he even able to say with the young ruler, “ All these things have I kept from my youth up.”

This looking up took place in various ways. If faith is essentially the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, it must manifest itself in every believer in the same manner to the end of time. The Scriptures themselves call it not only an eating and drinking, but also a hungering and thirsting ; not only a confidence, but a taking refuge ; it is not only compared to an oak, but also to grass. If one individual looked up to the brazen serpent with joyful confidence, another did so with timid despondency ; if one fixed his eye firmly upon it, because it was sufficiently near for him to see it distinctly, another might foster anxious doubts whether his mode of looking up was of the right kind ; since, because of his distance from it, he could not clearly see it, nor know whether his look was really fixed upon the serpent, or upon some other object ; and some scrupulous individuals might even raise doubts in themselves from its being said, “ If any one is bitten by *a* serpent,” and thus make it a subject of hesitation whether it had reference to them or not, seeing that they had been

wounded by several; for how many scruples present themselves against the simple belief in Jesus! This looking up was effected by turning away the sight from every other object; and thus faith perseveringly seeks salvation in Christ alone, until it obtains a complete cure, with an acknowledgment of its supreme necessity, and with ardent gratitude and joy.

Therefore let us regard ourselves, my dear brethren, as also dwelling in this world at Zalmonah; and let us all look upon ourselves as being infected with the poison of the dragon, which infallibly terminates fatally. Let us be further convinced, that in ourselves we can find no remedy, even were we to use every effort in our power. Take your wretchedness not less seriously to heart, than the children of Israel did their horrible situation, and seek for deliverance with the same earnestness as they, before it is too late. If such is already the case with you; if you are mourning, sorrowful, and apprehensive, on account of it; remember, also, that even as the serpent was lifted up, so the Son of God was also lifted up; and that the doctrine of the cross is still preached, in order that every one who believes in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life.

Learn to exercise faith. Do not let your wretchedness deter you, but rather impel you; and flee the more earnestly to him, the more miserable you feel; for he is able and willing to save all who come unto him. Continue to do this, even until perfect recovery ensues. Suffer not a single doubt to remain in you; but go on from faith to faith, so that you may doubt no more. Let no sting continue in your consciences, nor any sinful lust or desire in your hearts, or irregu-

larity in your walk and conduct ; but resist all this' and strive against it by faith, until you attain to sight, and conflict terminate in repose. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall ; and so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

VIII.

PUNON.

NUMB. xxxii. 2.

“ And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon.”

SACRED history is again silent. It gives us no information respecting this encampment, further than the name, which, in the twenty-first chapter, is not even mentioned, and, therefore, it is considered only as belonging to the former, and as one with it. The occurrence at the previous encampment is also so remarkable, that it is only reasonable we should make a pause after considering it, and not pass over immediately to new subjects of meditation. Universal history, which otherwise makes no mention of these encampments, notices this, under the name of Phenon, or Phinon; not, however, as a place where the children of Israel encamped, but as a district, in which remarkable mines are met with, which, in ancient times, were diligently worked, but subsequently neglected under Syrian jurisdiction; yet, in the sequel, the works were again assiduously carried on. The copper obtained there

was of superior quality, and it appears certain, that the copper of which the brazen serpent was made, was taken from these very mines. Had not Christ a double origin? If we were desirous of replying to Pilate's question, "From whence art thou?" we would say, he came from on high, from his Father, by means of his essential deity; and as to his other origin, from the deeply fallen stock of the human race, in his real humanity.

But universal history mentions concerning Punon, not only that it formerly contained mines, but also gives us very afflictive intelligence respecting this district. For many Christians were banished to these mines by heathen emperors, and were condemned to labour in them for a series of years, and even for life, and thus make reparation for the insult they had offered to the world, in becoming converts to Christianity. Eusebius, a christian historian of the fourth century, informs us, that bishop Sylvanus, with thirty-nine others, was beheaded there. Athanasius, his contemporary, states, that bishop Eutychius, with many others, had been banished to the mines, and particularly mentions, that it was to the mine at Punon. Euphanus, as well as Theodoret, relates the same thing. But that which appears more particularly worthy of our compassion, is the circumstance, that these cruelties were not only practised by the heathen, but also by the Arians, who, although they gave themselves out for Christians, and Christians exclusively, did not believe in the Godhead of Christ, and persecuted those who believed and confessed it. Thus Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, continually persecuted Isaac, who is born after the Spirit; thus it is still, although in another manner,

and will continue so unto the end. But how worthy of our respect were those Christians, who thus preferred being condemned to the horrible mines of Punon, than be induced to depart from the truth! and how powerful is that grace, which can strengthen weak men in such a manner! Their path to Canaan led them, also, through Punon, although, in a manner, which was dreadful to nature. But it was only a path to a most glorious consummation! "I know where thou dwellest," saith the Lord. He knew, also, that some of his members were in the mines at Punon. There he frequently visited them, and comforted their hearts, so that they were able to exult with joy in the bowels of the earth. Is any one inclined to ask, how the Lord could permit his children to be thrust down under ground with the vilest malefactors, let him ask the Lord himself; let him ask, at the same time, whether he is not rich enough to recompense all this a hundred-fold; and inquire, how it is possible, that for the sake of such unworthy sinners as we are, he could suffer himself to be crucified. If any one is inclined to complain of his situation, let him think of Punon. The meaning of this will also bring to our remembrance, as it were, another Punon, to which many a one has been already banished, and from which he has been afterwards delivered.

Since sacred history forsakes us here, we must content ourselves with tracing the meaning of the name of this encampment. First, the word signifies great doubt, and the anxiety arising from it; and this was what we meant by saying, that many a child of God had been exiled thither, and again delivered from it. As much anxiety and horror may be caused

by doubts, as by banishment to the mines; and they are still more difficult to bear than the latter, if the Lord cheers the heart of the individual in his banishment, which is not the case in the former instance. This Punon of great doubt is a horrible residence in the dark profundities of the earth, into which no ray of solar light, no look from heaven, can enter; or, if any thing of the kind occurs, the stars alone are seen, those emblems of immutable fidelity. If we are desirous of reading a description of what passes at Punon, we have only to look at the eighty-eighth Psalm, that most mournful of all the Psalms, where the suffering saint makes use of the word Punon, in the 15th verse, which, in our version is rendered, "I am distracted;" but in others, "I am full of doubt; I know not what is the matter with me; I know not how to help myself;" all which are melancholy significations. It is derived from a word, which is called *perhaps*, and points out an individual who is afraid, first of one evil, and then of another; at one time he hopes, at another he desponds; now regarding himself as lost, then regaining a little courage; or even tottering on the verge of eternity.

When David said, in his haste, "All men are liars," and in his despondency, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul," or when he said, "I am cast out from the presence of the Lord," he was at Punon, and could say, with his friend Heman, "I am distracted." The same thing is applicable to the church, when saying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me!" or when inquiring, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Such a state of doubt is certainly a disease, from which

we ought to let ourselves be healed by the only physician; it is also directly opposed to the nature of faith, and the covenant of grace; it does not tend to promote the Lord's glory, and renders more difficult the Christian's pilgrimage. But ah! how many a one, after possessing great assurance of faith, has entered into this Punon, either by his own fault, or by the gracious arrangement and guidance of God, in order that he may thus be rendered lowly, modest, prudent, and humble; so that if inclined to glory, he may glory in the Lord. But this state of doubtfulness invariably emanates from the damnable source of the unbelief, blindness, and corruption of our hearts, and ought by no means to be excused. We ought rather to be able unanimously to say with our catechism, "I trust in my faithful and heavenly Father, in such a manner, that I doubt not he will provide me with all I need, both for body and soul, and order all the evil which he sends me, in this vale of tears, for my good, since he is able to do so as an Almighty God, and willing, also, as a faithful Father."

This doubtfulness has reference to every thing connected with our salvation, although one doubt may torment one person in Punon in a greater degree than another. Some are terrified at the idea of not belonging to the elect. "Christ was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; what claims hast thou, therefore, who art a Canaanite and a dog, upon him?" a scruple that has tortured some to death, and destroyed all self-righteousness in them in such a manner, that they often thought that they themselves would perish in the conflict. Some have suffered themselves to be brought to the

brink of despair, by the apprehension of having committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; and the more so, since the blasphemous thoughts which arose in them, and which they were afraid to reveal to any one, forcibly impressed the conviction upon them, that they really had committed it, and were lost beyond recovery. Some strongly doubt the genuineness of their conversion, together with their sincerity, and the reality of the assurance they have received, and the consolation they have enjoyed; and have many and cogent reasons, as they suppose, for their doubts, such as the following: their grief on account of their sins, and the consolation of forgiveness, was not so great and permanent as that which has been felt by others. They not only find much that is sinful in them, but are also unable to say, that it is at all times so repugnant to them as it ought and would be, were it of the right kind, thus making Augustine's words their own, and saying, "Deliver me, but not just yet." Their love, say they, is so lukewarm, their prayer so powerless, their conflict so ineffectual, their faith so unproductive. What farther need of witnesses have they to prove that the whole of their religion is spurious?

There are some, who distress themselves with the fear of self-deception. It makes them ill, when they call to mind, that of the ten virgins, five were foolish, to whom the Lord at length said, "Depart from me! I know you not!" and that there are people from whom every thing will be taken away, which they seem to have; time-servers, who, in the season of temptation, fall away; people, who are weighed in

the balances, and found wanting. These, indeed, are doubts, which are able to torment a soul to death, as those well know, who have been in the mines at Punon.

There are, also, some who know not their real state, in consequence of the species of temptations to which they are exposed, and which cannot be told, and who say, in their way, with David, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul;" they will eventually overpower me. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick."

Finally, some fall into Punon, when they consider their way and guidance, and feel as Gideon did, when he said, "If the Lord is with us, why do these things happen to us?" or like the Jews, when they asked, "How is it that thou lovest us?"

Thus the reverse and dark side of religion frequently shows itself. "We are troubled on every side," says the Apostle; although he adds, "yet not distressed; we are cast down, but not in despair." In no case ought doubts to be regarded as proofs. David never fell into the hands of Saul, although he deemed it inevitable. Zion once openly said, "The Lord hath rejected me!" but such was not the case, and it was more possible for a woman to forget her suckling, than that God should forget his Zion. Paul thought at Ephesus, that he should certainly be slain. Peter, and the rest of the disciples, cried out, "We perish!" but still they lived for many years after. The wealthy fool, on the contrary, felt perfectly safe, and thought he should live many years, but died the same night. Security begets presumption, and the latter does no

good. Doubts are often very useful, and occasion us to dig deep, even as David says, "My spirit made diligent search." They serve for the purpose of rendering the individual needy and comfortless; but these are the characters whom the Lord helps in a glorious manner.

However, it is salutary to rid ourselves of these restraining doubts, and very necessary for us to attain to the full assurance of faith. But they are too deeply rooted to be eradicated merely by human proofs, in a thorough and satisfactory manner. Yet if we trace the meaning of the name of this encampment further, it will direct us to some sure and certain remedies against this, as well as every other spiritual disease. If we consider the term Punon as consisting of as many words as syllables, the first syllable denotes a turning to a countenance, or a corner; but the other syllable indicates son; and hence the following idea and signification results; "The turning to the countenance of the Son, who is the corner-stone." And is not this, in reality, the case? Is not this the only, and, at the same time, the sure and proper way to be freed from oppressive doubts in particular, as well as from every other disease and death? Proclamation was probably made in the Israelitish camp, that they were to turn their faces to the brazen serpent, in order that every one who was bitten, might know how the bite of the serpents could be rendered innoxious. And what else shall we proclaim, than "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" They that look unto him are lightened, and their faces are not ashamed; and what can be more useful and necessary to every one, than the conviction of the woman, who had the issue of

blood, that if she touched but the hem of his garment, she should be made whole ?

I am of opinion that a great doubt may easily have occurred to many who had been bitten by the serpent, according to the signification of the name of this encampment previously given, how the simple and unimportant looking at a lifeless serpent of brass could prove a remedy for the real bite of a living and poisonous serpent? What, was there nothing more to be done than the mere looking? Had there been an incision, a burning, excoriating, or something of the kind, one might the sooner have listened to it. How can such things be? For by the sight of the metal, the effect of the poison communicated was only rendered the more painful. But though those who were still uninjured might have found time to scruple in this manner, yet those that were bitten had no time for it; their distress powerfully impelled them to look up, and they did so the more eagerly, the more the fatal doubt, above mentioned, endeavoured to restrain them; and whilst, by thus looking up, their bodies were healed from the poison, their hearts were also delivered from doubt. "One thing I know," said the man born blind, "that though I was blind, yet now I see." And when the men of reason inquired, "How opened he thine eyes?" he always gave the same answer; "He put clay upon my eyes, and said, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. I went and washed, and now I see." If they sought to investigate still more minutely into the manner of the cure, he left it to their penetration to discover. It was sufficient for him that his eyes were opened. How this was accomplished by means of the clay, he left to

the Lord, who was pleased, by this singular means, to confer the benefit upon him.

What more glorious object can be seen, than the face of him who is the fairest of the children of men ! The countenance of a man is, as it were, the mirror of his feelings. His satisfaction and displeasure, his kindness and his repugnance, his pride and his condescension manifest themselves in his features. And what does the penitent perceive, when beholding the face of Jesus Christ ; when, as Paul says, faith is quickened by the knowledge of the blessings which we have in Christ ; he then recovers, as of himself. “ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth ! for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour, I know of none.” This turning and looking is certainly too trifling a matter for many a self-righteous person, and it would seem to him much more appropriate, if a variety of difficult exercises were imposed upon him. Such characters have first to learn, that “ it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” If the children of Israel had stayed to count their wounds and weep over them, to feel horrified at the serpents, to take to flight, and run hither and thither, and if they had even had recourse to cutting and burning—what would have been the result ? They must have died notwithstanding. It was the serpent, the brazen serpent, which was the appointed means, by which they were to obtain a complete and perfect cure. He who refused to make use of this remedy in the Lord’s appointed way, and employed other means according as he thought fit, became guilty of culpable disobe-

dience, and suffered death justly, and by his own fault.

Look, therefore, and look intently. What dost thou behold? I see a wounded and bleeding King, who wears a crown of thorns; a Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. Who is this King? Yes, who will declare his generation, the dignity of his descent, the greatness of his power, the splendour of his glory, and the ardour of his love? No one knows and comprehends it wholly but his Father. Higher than the heavens, he descended into the lowest parts of the earth, and ascended again above all heavens, where he seated himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high, expecting till all things shall be subdued unto him, after having purged our sins by himself. He who is God blessed for ever, descended from the fathers according to the flesh. By his power he can render all things subject to him; his glory is so great, that even his beloved disciple fell at his feet at the sight, as dead; and the height, depth, breadth, and length of his love passes knowledge, and the peace he gives passes all understanding. To know him is eternal life itself. Why then is such a one wounded and bruised? Alas, for our sins and for our transgressions! The chastisement of our peace lay upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. And certainly the sight of his wounds cures every disease, heals every sorrow and doubt, and fills us with peace and love, with power and joy.

But what more dost thou see, when looking unto him? I see in him my surety, my representative, who stood in my place in his sufferings, obedience, and in his glory. Yea, I am crucified, slain, dead, and buried

to him and with him. The curse I had brought upon myself, and the sentence of death pronounced upon me, was executed upon his most sacred person in all its severity and its utmost extent. I am, therefore, pure, guiltless, and blameless in him, if my faith only apprehends it.

Seest thou any thing more? I behold in him the gift of God to me, a gift of God which includes every thing in it that is requisite to render me unspeakably rich, happy, holy, and glorious; like the sun, which dispenses, together with light and warmth, so many other innumerable blessings, for which nothing can compensate; a pearl, to possess which, the wise man will sell all that he has, and esteem all things but loss that he may win Christ. But whoever loves and esteems any thing, however precious it may otherwise be, more than him, is not worthy of him. And how gladly will that individual suffer himself to be deprived of every thing, who is convinced, that in this divine gift, every thing shall be restored an hundred-fold; how ready will he be to be regarded as a fool by the world, and to be so in his own eyes, in order that he may become wise! He will esteem all his own righteousness but as a filthy garment, in order, in its stead, to obtain such a beauteous robe as Christ is; will prefer glorying in his weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon him, and gladly regard himself and be regarded as nothing, as ungodly, and as an untimely birth, that grace may rest upon him. But he will also confess with joy, that we are complete in Christ, and that besides him we require no strength, nor worthiness, nor righteousness, nor wisdom, because we are made perfect in one. O if thou knewest the

gift of God, thou wouldst certainly have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water, which should have become in thee a well of water, springing up into everlasting life !

But how will it finally be, when they who believed on him and loved him, although they saw him not, shall at length see him as he is and become like him ? How happy, courageous, and cheerful are those, even here below, who are able to appreciate this gift by faith, and accept of it ; who drink of this water, put on this robe, and appropriate this treasure to themselves !

This ought to be our object and our aim. All that impels us to Christ, and induces us to place our confidence in him, is of the greatest utility, whether it be effected by the law or the gospel, by threatenings or promises, by our misery or the glory of Christ. But all that leads us away from him, and withdraws us from him, whether it be prosperity or adversity, reason or folly, sin or virtue, our own hearts, the devil, or other men, is nothing but disadvantage and loss, whatever appearance it may present, and whether it assume the name of reason, seriousness, zeal, diligence, prudence, or any other appellation.

Out of Christ there is no salvation. Be he, therefore, our only consolation in life and in death. Let us, consequently, look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and persevere in doing so, that thus we may receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Amen.

IX.

OBOTH.

NUMB. xxxiii. 43.

“ And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth.”

ONE of the most remarkable appellations which Jesus Christ applies to himself, is that when he calls himself the way. (John xiv. 6.)

A way affords the possibility of attaining from one place to another. If we possessed in the moon the most valuable treasures, we should be obliged to renounce them, because there is no road thither. Hence, in a figurative sense, the means of obtaining any particular object, are called ways. Even divine guidance is so called, because it is the medium by which God either reveals himself in his perfections, or conducts men to their destined aim.

Now Christ is the way. He is the way to escape from our misery, sin, and curse, from the wrath of God and our individual anxieties and distresses, and to attain to the favour of God, remission of sins, righteousness, a holy nature, life, and blessedness. We require him for this purpose, and nothing else but him.

But, certainly, no way can be of use to us, unless we enter upon and advance forwards in it. The same may be also said of Christ. Even as we place ourselves in connection with ■ way by walking upon it outwardly, so we must spiritually place ourselves in connection with this living way, which is effected by means of faith, which the Scripture calls a receiving Christ, and a hungering and thirsting after him.

But of what avail are the best and smoothest paths to him who has not the use of his limbs? None at all; for an ability is presupposed, which he does not possess. Such is not, however, the case with this path. It is also called on that account the way, because it comes first to the soul, and thereby takes away as much as is requisite of this inability. A mother also, as regards her new-born child, is the way to life, preservation, and growth, by the care she takes of the child; and thus Christ acts in like manner towards the soul.

But the divine guidance is also called ■ way by which the Lord leads the soul upon this royal road, makes it acquainted with it, preserves and confirms it therein, promotes its progress upon it, and teaches and exercises the individual how to walk in it.

These ways, though they are manifold, have one origin—mercy; one basis—the blood of Christ; one intention—the formation of Christ in the soul; and one aim—eternal glory. The wanderings of the children of Israel afford us a representation of them. The festivals of the christian church directed our attention for a while to other subjects, and we made a halt. Let us now take up our staff and inspect the thirty-sixth encampment. We are again obliged to content

ourselves with limiting our meditation to the meaning of the name of this encampment.

Oboth signifies, first of all, bottles, vessels of leather, into which, in ancient times, wine was put, as now into casks. The children of Israel had arrived at or really entered into the land of Moab and Edom, where much good wine was produced, especially red wine. Isaiah and Jeremiah both notice the vines and noble grapes of this land, and the latter compares the Moabites themselves to wine, when he says, " Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity : therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles." (Jer. xlviii. 11, 12.) This is the same sentiment which Asaph expresses, as follows, in Psalm lxxiii. " I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. But all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

Israel had here, probably, a pleasant encampment among the vineyards ; but even though it had been permitted them to eat of the fruit of them, there were no grapes at the time ; for it was in the beginning of spring, as we see from the circumstance, that some months afterwards they celebrated Easter. Thus there are many who come either too soon or too late. David

once expresses himself thus, "My life is spent in sorrow;" and when this is the case, it may arise from a variety of causes. Happy is he who loves God; because all things shall work together for his good. And happy are we if we know and possess that vine which bears still more excellent fruit. The bride also rejoices, in Solomon's Song, ii. 4, saying, "He brought me into the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." This is a type of the rich consolations and refreshments, with which the Holy Spirit sometimes inundates the believing soul, even here below, and which are a foretaste of heaven, where they shall be poured out in full measure. But in every case, the vine, even though devoid of grapes and leaves, is better than the grapes; and the bride exults with reason, that love is better than wine. Let it grieve or comfort, wound or heal, caress or be angry, if it only love us. And this is assuredly the case with him.

I have just mentioned the probability that the children of Israel were encamped in an agreeable situation; but I am now inclined to consider myself under a mistake. For although they were encamped in Edom, a people, indeed, nearly allied to them, having the same Isaac for their progenitor, yet they were their bitter enemies, and, at the same time, of an entirely different religion, and even devoted to idolatry; consequently, they were dangerous to them for this reason also. Besides the Edomites, they were surrounded by other not less dangerous nations, the Moabites and Amorites. Alas, poor Israel! thou art the least among all nations. For if thou art in number as the stars of heaven, they are like the sand on the sea shore. If the Lord were not on thy side, they

would swallow thee up quick. If thou wert not saved by the Lord thy God, thou wouldest not be saved at all. If he were not the sword of thy victory, thou wouldest have none; and were he not the shield of thy help, thou wouldest be like one who has no help. Nothing remains for thee but to trust in the Lord, that thou mayest inherit the land, and possess the mountain of the Lord.

Do we not always find the words of Christ confirmed, "there are few which find the way that leadeth unto life?" Has not Edom, who refuses to hear any thing of Christ, long ago stirred himself up? and can Israel cause his voice to be heard, without being seized and overpowered on every side? True Christians, indeed, the Israel of God, have hitherto borne this, but only from necessity. It is not yet formally prohibited us to preach the doctrine of Christ. But the sentiments of people afford us no security that this may continue to be the case for a single week. There is, however, an Edom, even in ourselves; and who is there that may not be fully occupied in expelling the evil that is in him? "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Israel will at length happily overcome, for the Lord himself takes him and bears him upon his wings, even as an eagle leads forth her young, and hovers over them.

But the word from whence this encampment has its name, signifies not merely a wine-skin, but also one who possesses a spirit of divination, and is filled with it, as a vessel is filled with wine. In this sense it is used in Lev. xx. 27. "A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death." Such a one was the woman of Endor, to

whom Saul had recourse in his distress, in order to ask counsel of her, and whom she herself reminded, that he had caused the Oboth to be rooted out of the land. It is a well-known fact, that the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language a few centuries before Christ. In this translation, the woman is called a ventriloquist, which singular art is also alluded to by the prophet Isaiah. This word Oboth, therefore, signifies enchantments. If the children of Israel had now arrived on enchanted ground, they were certainly in a critical situation, like the wanderer who is overtaken on a dangerous road by a thick fog, so that he is unable to see before him, however requisite it may be to him to do so, and therefore easily falls into great danger.

We will not occupy our time by the consideration of that which is properly called magic and enchantment. Every thing of this nature has long been ridiculed, as belonging to the most stupid and absurd superstition, respecting which a reasonable man believes nothing; and it cannot be denied that superstition has had much to do in the matter. The knowledge of nature, education, and the progress of intellect, at least in a great part of Europe, is so far extended and promoted, that there are only a few who believe in the existence, and perhaps even in the possibility, of enchantments. Many go so far as even to dispute and deny the existence of the devil and evil spirits, and consequently also, the possibility of their operation and influence; by which, however, they do little honour to the word of God, which so clearly teaches it, that no one can deny the former without directly contradicting the latter. It is certain that the word of God permits of no magicians nor sorcery, whether both are imaginary, or

founded in reality. It is also certain, that in the times of ancient heathenism, much that is wonderful occurred, which cannot be explained from natural causes; and that their oracles, when Christianity began to spread, became either contemptible or ceased. As much as was told and invented respecting this in ancient times, so little is believed or thought of it now. If formerly people believed too much, and without sufficient reason, they have begun, especially during the latter half of the past century, with equally as little reason, to believe too little, and scarcely any thing at all. If people were formerly superstitious, they are now incredulous. Both are wrong. If superstition is injurious, unbelief is still more so. Condemnation is pronounced without circumlocution upon the latter, which may also become a consequence of the former.

However, we ought not to make a boast of our freedom from superstition, nor to think too highly of ourselves in consequence of it. For, first, it may extend further, and be of a more refined nature, than many suppose. One individual denominates that superstition, which appears very rational to another. Thus, to illustrate what we have said by an example, we regard the confidence you place in your own views, powers, virtue, and good qualities, together with your hoping in the goodness of God, as mere lamentable superstition, founded on great blindness, and which is a hindrance to salvation and godliness, as long as you do not regard yourselves as blind, nor let sight be communicated to you by him who is the light of the world. It will be seen how impregnable you are against superstition and sorcery, when those lying

signs, and wonders, and powers, according to the working of Satan, manifest themselves, in order to support the revelation of that wicked one mentioned in 2 Thess. ii.

How the case stood with reference to ventriloquism, which is now by no means rare, I cannot say, for I know not whether it presupposes a diseased state of the constitution, or is something natural, or whether it carries with it something suspicious and magical, as the Greek version of the Bible intimates. But it does not serve to promote the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom, nor can it proceed from faith; it is therefore sin; and who can foresee to what evil purposes this strange and inexplicable thing may be applied in future, since it has only hitherto served for the amusement of the curious.

Still more strange than this are the phenomena of animal magnetism, by which persons fall into an incomprehensible state, and perform and utter incomprehensible things, so that we feel inclined to regard them as Oboths, as people who possess a spirit of divination. That in their preternatural state, they bring forward religious and pious subjects, does not mend the matter, but only renders it the more dangerous. The Philippian damsel was not only able to foretell, and by this means gain much money, because she was possessed with a spirit of divination, but she also followed after Paul, and cried, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." (Acts xvi. 16, 17.) But after this had continued many days, Paul was grieved at it, and turned and said unto the spirit, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of

her," and it departed immediately. At that period, people had books full of directions how to attain to prescience and a knowledge of the magic arts. These were collected together by those who believed, and burned, although their value amounted to above a thousand pounds. For the gospel teaches us to be desirous of knowing nothing but Christ and him crucified. Hence it is a subject worthy of consideration, that, in the present day, magnetism, this suspicious thing, has been used as a means to discover truths of a more profound nature, whilst we ought not to be desirous of knowing more than the word of God teaches us.

But I leave the subject. The singular spirit of the present time does not cause us apprehension without reason, and induces us to ask, "What do you think will be the end of it? What shall we live to see? What will still occur?" I do not mean that we ought to endeavour to obtain answers to these questions which concern the future, but to deny ourselves still more entirely, and cleave in confidence and affection the more closely to the Lord, who knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. For here is the faith and patience of the saints. If it was ever requisite to watch and be sober, it is so at present; for the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

But there are also sorceries in a figurative sense, without the intervention of any particular magical or preternatural powers. Thus Paul asks the Galatians, "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" And how various and powerful are these kinds of enchantment! They are chiefly threefold;

and we will divide them into earthly, sensual, and religious.

What a magical power dwells in *earthly* things and possessions ! They are the god of many, whom they exclusively and unweariedly serve, to whom they sacrifice every thing, and for the sake of whom they are content to fatigue and deny themselves, and even expose their lives to imminent peril, without complaining. And if every thing prospers according to their wish, what is the object for which they strive ? To leave extensive possessions to their heirs, which only very few accomplish. We do not deny that it is allowable, by diligence and industry, to obtain property in a lawful manner, and to preserve and increase that which is thus obtained. God himself places the rich and the poor together. The becoming rich depends upon time and success ; but these are in the hands of God. “ If riches increase,” says David, “ set not your hearts upon them ;” he does not say, cast them away. Rich people may be godly people, even as the poor may be ungodly, as Scripture and experience testify. Neither the one nor the other render us acceptable or displeasing to God ; and when Christ pronounces a woe upon the rich, he does not mean those who, possessing much property, are at the same time poor in spirit. Paul, however, says of those who will be rich, that “ they fall into temptation and a snare, and into many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition.” (1 Tim. vi. 9.) How are multitudes so enchanted with earthly possessions, that they endeavour to obtain them by every possible means ! Deceit, fraud, artifice, impositions of every kind, and injustice, are practised without remorse, or in spite of it, and the load of guilt accumulates

with the property. They are so enchanted, that they can scarcely endure a temporal loss or injury, whilst, at the same time, they are perfectly indifferent as to what becomes of their souls; so enchanted, that they will patiently endure any toil and danger for the sake of earthly gain, so that they even become thieves, and, instead of advantage, receive their just punishment; whilst they are speechless at the question, "What art thou doing for the salvation of thy soul?" Many, with all their wealth, are so tormented by covetousness, which is the root of all evil, that they can scarcely enjoy it themselves, much less grant the gratification of it to others. Are not such characters bewitched and insane, who thus prefer a dead nut to a real pearl? who cast the latter away, and anxiously collect and preserve the former? Happy are they who are able to exult and say, "He hath redeemed us from the present evil world, and hath given us an understanding to know the truth." How worthy of all attention are those words of John, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world!" How necessary it is to obey the command of Christ, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Not less captivating nor less pernicious is the magical power of *sensual* lusts and appetites. Like tyrants, they lead multitudes captive in the chains of the most shameful, scandalous, and destructive lusts. Hence we meet with voluptuaries, whose eyes are full of adultery, and whose veins glow with an impure fire; drunkards, who, like madmen, destroy their earthly prosperity, without being able to master their passion, even though they attempt it; gamesters, who sacrifice their last farthing, and hasten with infuriated speed to

poverty and despair. How ingenious are mankind in the invention of amusements, in order to pass their lives as pleasantly as possible, whilst forgetting and despising the life to come! Look at the rage for dancing, which has cost many a one his health and life; the rage for attending theatres, and all the various things by which deluded men seek to render this life desirable, and the next unpalatable, instead of tearing out the offending eye, and cutting off and casting away the offending hand and hindering foot, since it would be much more beneficial to them to enter into the kingdom of heaven lame, crippled, and with one eye, than thus to be cast into the infernal lake as they are, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Woe unto you, that dwell in Oboth, on enchanted ground, where the majority suffer themselves to be bewitched! Become sober at length, and escape from the snares of Satan.

Whole books have been written on the subject of *religious* bewitchment. We will, however, make a few observations upon it. Particularly remarkable in this respect, are the religious enthusiasts and fanatics, of whom a variety of lamentable traces have been observed, even in our times, although not immediately in this part of the country, as was the case about ■ century ago, when it gave rise to a flourishing place in our neighbourhood. Even as the prevailing spirit of the present day tends, in most men, to induce them to reject the Holy Scriptures, in order to place their own reason on the throne, so there are always some to be found, who degrade and disesteem both, in order to follow the suggestions of a pretended inward light; and thus err in a variety of ways, by regarding their own

conceits as of divine inspiration. How much do we, poor erring mortals, need to hear a voice behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, and do not deviate either to the right hand or to the left." Paul asks the Galatians who had bewitched them, and prevented them from obeying the truth? And in what respect did they not obey the truth? In this, that they sought to be justified by the law and under the law. One would have thought, that if there was any church of which it was less to be apprehended than another, that they would fall from grace and lose Christ, it was this. They did run well; who hindered them? Paul had preached the gospel to them, and by so doing, had become so endeared to them, that they received him as an angel of God, and even as Jesus Christ himself; and were ready to pluck out their eyes for him. They felt and regarded themselves so happy at the time, that nothing could exceed it. But scarcely did certain individuals appear amongst them, who preached to them that they were in the wrong to regard themselves all at once as fully justified and saved, but that they must receive circumcision and keep the law, than the tables were entirely turned. Paul was no longer esteemed, his sermons no longer acceptable, grace and Christ insufficient, their blessedness at an end, and, instead of unanimity and love, dispute and discord insinuated themselves, so that, as the Apostle says, they bit and devoured one another; and therefore he asks them who had bewitched them?

The Apostles felt compelled, also, warmly to remonstrate, on the other hand, against the spirit of sectarianism, which induced one to say, I am of Paul, another of Apollos, and others, though not in the true

sense, of Christ; and to stay the abuse of grace, which was employed in an arbitrary manner, and perverted to frivolity and licentiousness, as well as to repulse a variety of disorders which had crept in.

In one place we behold Jews, bound by a magic power to their stupid Talmud. In another, rationalists, so blinded by their unbelief, and others again so infatuated by individual errors, that the most obvious demonstrations to the contrary rebound from them like arrows with leaden points, or only excite them to greater resistance. On the whole, we have good reason to remember what the Apostle says, in Eph. vi., that we have to wrestle with spiritual wickedness in high places, and with the rulers of darkness. This is certainly a very critical and dangerous position. Nothing can be accomplished by mere human strength and prudence, where we have to do with the devil's stratagems. God alone can help us through in such a case; here faith is necessary, which overcometh the world. Hence he encourages us also to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; to be strong through grace, in order that, having done all, we may stand.

Thus, in a certain sense, we are also encamped at Oboth, and the more so, the nearer we approach to Canaan, for Oboth is not far from Canaan. We may be deceived in a thousand different ways before we are aware. Many are taken in the devil's snares, and led captive by him at his will; and such characters we exhort to be sober-minded. We all carry about with us such a heart, that it is very needful for us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." But he who properly comprehends the greatness of the danger, will also duly consider what Solo-

mon says, "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up;" and will cleave unto him who says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Amen.

X.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMORITES.

NUMB. xxi. 21—31.

“ And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying,

“ Let me pass through thy land, we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards ; we will not drink of the waters of the well ; but we will go along by the king’s highway, until we be past thy borders.

“ And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border ; but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness ; and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

“ And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon ; for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

“ And Israel took all these cities ; and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.

“ For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon.

“ Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared.

“ For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon ; it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon.

“ Woe unto thee, Moab ! thou art undone, O people of Che-

mosh! He hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon, king of the Amorites.

“We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished, even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste, even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba.

“Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.”

At length—O how desirable!—at length we have arrived with the children of Israel at the last desert. It is called Moab. It is bordered by the Jordan, a river which separates it from Canaan, properly so called, and which the most of them are destined either to pass over or to pass through. This wilderness is of great extent, but is not what its name implies, being in some parts well cultivated, fruitful, a productive soil for vines, which produced excellent red wine, and formed a part of the inheritance of Israel; it also contained precious balms, especially at Gilead. It is the last, but also the most dangerous desert. There Moses found his grave; there the Israelites defiled themselves with idolatry and whoredom, which occasioned the destruction of twenty-four thousand of them; and there the false prophet Balaam spun his dangerous nets, and laid his snares with devilish subtlety. In this desert Moses installed Joshua as his successor, and there wrote his fifth book, called Deuteronomy.

The promises given at Nahaliel, where it was said, “Begin to possess the land, for I have given it into thine hand,” now began to receive their fulfilment. Moses, though more than a hundred years old, was obliged to go to war. It was, however, a singular species of warfare, seeing that he was previously as-

sured of victory. Such is also the nature of spiritual conflicts. "In all these things we are more than conquerors," is the war-cry. And how are we more than conquerors? "Through him that hath loved us." This mode of carrying on war is only known and current in the kingdom of God; and a system of tactics is observed by the soldiers of Jesus Christ, which is only known and practicable to them through the Holy Spirit. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God," that we may destroy and take captive. It is not our own strength, purpose, will, and firm resolve, nor is it the weakness of our adversary, on which we depend; but when we are weak, then are we strong; for the strength of the Lord is powerful in the weak. Ought we not naturally to feel compassion for the aged Moses, now a hundred and twenty years old, who, though weak in his feet, so that he can no longer walk with ease, but whose natural force was in other respects not abated, nor his eye grown dim, to go to war at such a great age, and that too so near his end? But we must not reckon upon good days here below. The journey not unfrequently becomes the more fatiguing, the nearer we approach to Canaan. The last station is generally the most oppressive. But our hope is in him who hath delivered us, and daily doth deliver, and will still redeem us from all evil, and bring us to his heavenly kingdom.

The people against whom the war was carried on, were called Amorites. They constituted one of those nations, whose country God had promised to Abram in Gen. xv., before he had a son, and of whom it is said, in verse 16th, "their iniquity is not yet full;

the measure of their sins is not yet complete." Woe to those nations and individuals, with regard to whom the justice of God only waits till they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, for their extirpation speedily succeeds! Take good heed, therefore, to yourselves. They were one of the principal nations which inhabited Canaan, and gave the name to all the rest. God commanded them to be completely rooted out; but we hear of them four hundred years afterwards, under the government of Solomon, who rendered all that were left of them tributary to him. They frequently seduced Israel to idolatry, and thereby brought down the wrath of God upon them. They were never permitted to be received amongst the people of God, nor Israel to form an alliance, or enter into covenant with them. They are exhibited, therefore, as the figure of sin, error, and seduction, respecting which it is said, "Put it off, crucify it, mortify your members which are on the earth. Sin not, pluck it out, cut it off, have no fellowship with the works of darkness."

But that which is mentioned in the third chapter of the book of Judges, respecting the Amorites, is highly remarkable. They are there numbered amongst "the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan. And that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least, such as before knew nothing thereof." They were left in order to prove Israel, that it might be evident, whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord. Hence there is a needs be, according to the assertion of Jesus, that offences come; but woe to the

world, on account of them! and woe unto him through whom they come! He does not teach us to pray, that the temptation may be removed, but that we may not be led into it. And Paul says, "For there must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." And, as was the case with Israel, temptations will increase with the times, so that if it were possible, the very elect shall be deceived, as well as all that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Circumstances occur in the lives of individuals, as well as in the experience of the church, which serve instead of a fan, to separate the chaff from the wheat. He that is wise, arms himself, that he may be found worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man. The Amorites are really still in being, and the injunctions respecting our conduct towards them continue in full force. Refer, respecting this, to Rom. vii.

Much might be said of the wars of Canaan, of the spiritual art of war, and weapons, as well as of their use. We content ourselves, at present, with quoting what our catechism says upon the sixth petition. "Since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot a moment withstand, and since our sworn enemies, Satan, the world, and our own flesh, do not cease to assail us, do thou, therefore, preserve and strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may make a firm resistance, and not succumb in the spiritual conflict, until we finally obtain a complete victory!"

These people were called Amorites, which signifies, talkers, or also potentates; hence such a one is still

called in the East, an Emir. They are those who boast themselves, and are the rulers of this world; even as Asaph complains, in Psalm lxxiii., "that they set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." And when we reflect upon the shallow speculations of men upon the most important concerns, such as those of religion and salvation, we must, at the same time, confess, that it is equally superficial and presumptuous; and join with Asaph, in saying, "therefore the world follows them, and runs after them like an overflowing stream." (Luther's version.)

Ah! what devastation has error, from time immemorial, effected, and still effects! How blood-thirsty have its defenders frequently manifested themselves against the truth and its adherents, or else what artifices have they employed! Truth itself, which is, at the same time, the way and the life, was first banished into a stable, afterwards scourged, spit upon, crucified, slain, and buried, as far as was possible. But it naturally rose again from the dead, and found a multitude of those who professed it. But even the authority of the Apostles was insufficient to prevent error from having access to the churches; for out of themselves arose ravening wolves. With the trowel in one hand, in order to build, the holy Apostles were compelled to take the sword in the other, in order to fight, as was the case with Israel, in the days of Nehemiah, (ch. iv. 17.) In one place, legality threatened to expel the gospel; in another, evangelical liberty was in danger of being made use of as a covering to wickedness, and grace of being turned into licentiousness. Erroneous doctrines were taught, and

immoral lives were led, and others were easily moved away from the hope of the gospel. At length a most cruel persecution put a salutary, but painful restraint upon the lawlessness of the flesh; but outward prosperity again overthrew the barrier. The heretical Pelagius attacked truth at the root, by asserting the power of free will, and it required the spiritual energy of an Augustine, who opposed him, to prevent Christ, the physician of souls, from being made into a mere moralist. But, subsequently, the letter took the place of the Spirit. A multitude of outward ceremonies and shadows superseded that which was real. The pure gospel disappeared, and wherever it showed itself, it was inhumanly pursued with fire and sword, so that its professors were obliged to creep into holes and caverns. Satan placed on the summit of the deception an individual, whom he set forth as the representative of Jesus Christ, and clothed with supreme power, though he was in reality the representative of the old serpent, which incessantly bruised the heel of the woman's seed, and, like Cain, slew his righteous brother.

But I break off. When I think, however, of the great benefit conferred upon his church by the Prince of Peace, three centuries ago, in the persons of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, and others, those heroes in the faith, it is impossible to refrain from tears, whilst reflecting to what an extent, during the last fifty years, the Amorites again rule in Canaan. If the holy men of God, above-mentioned, were now to travel through the country, and examine into the state of the churches, which call themselves after them, Lutherans, Reformed, or even Evangelical, O how

few would they find, where they would delight to stay, and take part in the worship, and to what a severe criticism would they expose themselves! And this state of things is not likely soon to improve; but, on the contrary, may be expected to be much worse before it is better. The one casts a red robe upon Jesus, the other a white one. The latter asks, "What shall I do with Jesus of Nazareth, who is called Christ?" The former replies, "Away with him!" And at length the sentence is, that their request and proposal be fulfilled. For mankind have a hateful way of paying homage to error, because it corresponds with our nature; but the Son of God is not believed, *because* he speaks the truth. (John viii. 45.) This is dreadful! But let this suffice.

I wish now to notice three things, which seem to me worthy of observation. The first is, that all the remarkable victories which the Israelites obtain, and of which mention is made in this chapter, are gained, within sight, as it were, of the brazen serpent, of which mention is made in the first nine verses of this chapter. It was not very far from this encampment of the Israelites, that this type of Christ was elevated on a cross, or transverse beam, on an eminence, and might be still seen by the Israelites, with good eyes. Now, even as formerly, Ephraim and Manasseh were blessed by the crossed hands of the dying patriarch, Jacob; so every blessing which we receive, emanates from him who became a curse for us on the cross; and the power to conquer every foe must be obtained from the beatifying and invigorating influences of this wonder-working banner. O that our spiritual vision may be so strengthened, that we

may never lose sight of this banner, this cross, this eminence, even though occasionally we should be under the necessity of seeking it, in order to hit the right point. Every victory is only a continuation of his universal conquest. Every consolation has its origin in his sorrow, every ray of light in his darkness, and all life emanates from his death. O that the blessing of the cross of Christ might be richly poured out in and upon us; we should then soon be able to overcome the Amorites, who rule where Christ crucified loses ground.

We remark, secondly, that the Lord is able to help, even by circuitous methods. This observation is founded on what is said in the 29th verse, concerning the king, who is spoken of in our text; that he had previously fought against the king of Moab, taken a province from him, and incorporated it into his kingdom. The Moabites would have Israel give way to them, and instead of assisting them on their departure out of Egypt, endeavoured to injure them in every possible manner. But in conquering Sihon's land, the latter obtained possession of the province which he had formerly taken from the Moabites, and were thus richly compensated for the treatment they received from the latter, as mentioned in Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. God can be for us in a variety of ways, either in a direct or indirect manner. Saul persecuted the church. But the injury he caused it was abundantly compensated by the circumstance, that the gospel was preached far and wide by those whom he compelled to flee, and finally he himself became a convert to it.

We have already remarked, how useful grievous

persecutions have been to the christian church; and that the errors which arise become the means of a more thorough knowledge of the truth. David was willing to let Shimei curse, in the hope that God would have respect to his affliction, and reward him with a blessing for the curses so unwarrantably uttered against him. How many are there, who have returned thanks for the sufferings they have endured, and have praised the Lord with the church, in Isaiah xii. that though he was angry with them, yet his anger is turned away, and he comforts them!

Speaking of Moab, I cannot refrain from remarking, that God, according to Deut. xxiii. 3, commanded that the Moabites should never enter into the congregation of the Lord; notwithstanding which, Ruth, a Moabitess, became a progenetrix of Jesus Christ; for his name is "Wonderful."

The third remark has reference to something that is a vexatious problem to the impious. Moses sent messengers with peaceful words to king Sihon, and entreated a passage through his territories, which he, however, refused, and went forth against Israel with an armed host, fought with them, and was beaten. This is very clear. But in Deut. ii. 30, the sacred historian removes a covering, and gives us to look into deep things, when he says, "The Lord hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hands." The question, therefore occurs, "For what purpose the peaceful message?" The reply to which is, "Humble thyself, friend, and take thy reason captive to the obedience of faith!"

Let us now consider a little more closely the war

itself, which is terminated by a single battle. With respect to the hostile king, he was called Sihon, which signifies one who roots out, and drives away. Whom does this typify but Satan, who roots out the image of God from our souls; and in its stead impresses his own image? “for ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,” says Christ. (John viii. 44.) Is it not he who still seeks the life of the child, and to destroy the work which may have been commenced, or at least to obscure and falsify it? Is he not busy, whilst the people are asleep, to sow tares, both in life and doctrine? to plunge some into the slough of despondency and unbelief, and entice others upon the dangerous heights of self-confidence; to cast this man into the pit of despair, and allure that into the snares of superstition? Is he not a mighty prince, a great angel, ruling in the darkness of this world, the God of which he is called? Nothing can be done with him by kind words or harsh language; the sword is requisite, even the sword of Israel, the Prince of God, which will infallibly conquer him. The host of this king is called Legion, for they are many. His armour is terrible; so that some apply to him the description of Leviathan, in the book of Job. Subtle as the serpent, he is, at the same time, cruel as the wolf, and strong as the lion. This is well signified by Heshbon, the capital city of the Amorites, which means an inventive understanding; and, in order to gain his ends, he transforms himself into an angel of light, and showed himself, when tempting Christ, well acquainted with Scripture. Paul speaks of his cunning devices, and is apprehensive, with respect to the Corinthians, that he might succeed in

turning away their minds from the simplicity which is in Christ. When necessary, he is even able to work miracles. Solomon describes man as having sought out many inventions, many Heshbons; that is, many false conclusions, in order to retain and excuse sin, and to persuade himself that he may be justified and saved without Christ. In short, Heshbon is that obscurity, in which men regard themselves as wise, and thereby become fools; for God brings to nought the wisdom of the wise, and rejects the counsel of the prudent. (1 Cor. i. 31.)

“Ye shall yourselves know what is good and evil, without requiring God to tell it you,” was one of the Heshbons, the prudent measures to which Satan resorted, in order to seduce our first parents to disobedience, and in which he succeeded so well, and darkened the minds of their offspring to such a degree, that instead of the true God, they worshipped stocks and stones. Innumerable are the subterfuges and excuses with which sinners justify their evil will, and think to blame the Almighty, even as Adam did, who stated, as the cause of his disobedience, the woman whom God had given him, and therefore an arrangement which had emanated from God himself, in order to exculpate himself. Numberless are the philosophical systems, which have altogether no other aim than that of expelling the gospel of Christ, and of deifying man; and error in doctrine has, at present, reached such a height, that all are deceived whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Heshbon, according to Solomon’s Song vii. 4, had a gate called Bath-rabbim, where many went in and out,

and near it such beautiful fish-ponds, that the bridegroom compares the eyes of his bride to them. "Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon." And, certainly, worldly wisdom has much in it to please and recommend it, since it exalts man to such a height and requires neither the renunciation of the world nor of self. No wonder that multitudes are caught by it, and that, with respect to the gospel, it is still true which was formerly said of it; "Have any of the rulers believed in it? Only the people that know not the law run after him." All men are such practical philosophers, as long as they are not born of water and the Spirit.

This Heshbon, according to verse 28, was burnt by the Israelites, but afterwards rebuilt, and inhabited by them. And there is also a Heshbon for the people of God; that is, the wisdom of the wise, which is indispensable to them, and renders them more prudent than Satan and his retinue. Paul says, in 2 Cor. xii. 16, in a good sense, "Being crafty, I caught you with guile;" and it is the will of Christ that we should be wise as serpents. The simple must become wise. But all true wisdom proceeds from apprehending and retaining Christ as our wisdom; in the conviction that without him we have none, and in the confidence that he will make us wise unto salvation.

Christians, as pilgrims, must pass through the land of the Amorites, where Satan reigns. But they do not drink of the poisoned wells of their opinions and doctrines, they do not stray into their fields in order to stay away from the marriage-supper, nor into their vineyards to enjoy their pleasures. They do not wish to dwell there, but only to pass through the land, for Canaan is the country they seek and desire. But the

devil and his adherents oppose them, because they refuse to be his subjects and confederates, come out from among them, and touch nothing that is unclean. They have crucified the King himself; how is it likely that they will suffer his subjects to pass without mocking at them? He even assembles all his people, marches out against Israel, and fights with them. But however mighty may be their armament, they are put to flight, for here is Immanuel. Israel conquers. For the breaker goes up before them, and they shall break through their foes.

May the God of peace tread down Satan under your feet shortly! Let Israel soon smite him with the edge of the sword and possess his land! Amen.

XI.

BALAK'S MESSAGE TO BALAAM.

NUMB. xxii. 1—13.

“ And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan by Jericho.

“ And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

“ And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed, because of the children of Israel.

“ And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

“ He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.

“ Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blessest, is blessed, and he whom thou cursest, is cursed.

“ And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hands; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

“ And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will

bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me; and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

“And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?

“And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent them unto me, saying,

“Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth; come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

“And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.

“And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.”

MANKIND are uncommonly inclined to boast, at least of sincerity of heart. Though they may decline commending themselves for many other things, yet they insist the more strenuously on the sincerity of their intentions. In the sight of God, sincerity is a momentous affair. If any one possess it, he may consider himself happy; for it belongs to the lineaments of the divine image. God created man upright. But this divine resemblance is lost, and sincerity along with it. Hence mankind employ so many artifices. Better would it be for them to pray with David, “Remove from me the way of lying, and grant me thy law graciously.” (Psalm cxix. 29.) He speaks here of a false or lying way. He perceives that he is at least liable to fall into it, so that his faith, love, and hope may be of an improper kind. He considers this as something of an evil nature. But what follows? He brings the matter before the God of all grace. He beseeches him to remove it from him, or diminish it. He entreats the opposite good; “Grant me thy law.” Vouchsafe to guide me aright. David,

in his transgressions, has certainly given hateful proofs of cunning and artifice, particularly in the case of Uriah, when he endeavoured to cover a grievous crime by one not less heinous; so that the letter to Uriah became a bye-word. In that affair the whole shame of his nakedness made itself manifest. Even Peter, after he had filled the office of an apostle for a long time with an abundant blessing, fell into bondage at Antioch, to the fear of man, and induced others to dissemble with him, for which Paul openly reproved him. (Gal. ii. 11—14.)

We have, therefore, a depraved nature, which manifests itself even in those who are really regenerate. "The heart," according to Jeremiah xvii. 9, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" And how necessary it is to pray with the prophet, in verse 14, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved." We have this day to contemplate a gloomy instance of flagitious deceitfulness. The Lord grant that our meditation may be blessed to us!

Moab is the last desert through which the children of Israel had to pass, in order to reach Canaan. There are still a few more encampments, the names of which are Dibon, Gad, Almon, Diblathaim, Beth, Jesimoth, and then Jordan and Canaan. It is in this desert that the remarkable, mysterious, and dangerous affair happens with Balaam the false prophet, in which even an ass speaks. It is in itself sufficiently remarkable, but still more so in its typical signification. I concur with the enlightened F. A. Lampe, who, in the third part of his work, entitled the "Mystery of the Covenant of Grace in the Economy of Salvation," perceives in this

narrative a prelude to extremely grievous phenomena in the first ages of the church, when he says, "Israel sustained the greatest injury from the Moabites, who followed the counsel of Balaam, and seduced them to idolatry and fornication."

This he explains, as follows:—"Even in the primitive church there were wicked men, who dissolved all the bands of social order, and, under the name of New Testament liberty, gave a loose to various impurities of the flesh, by which many were misled." He then adds, "The doctrine of Balaam is applied in the New Testament (Rev. ii. 14, 15,) to the teachers of erroneous doctrines. It is there said, 'I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.' Nicolaitans, according to the meaning of the word, are nothing else than Balaamites; that is, as Peter expresses it, those who assume the place of 'lords over God's heritage.' (1 Peter v. 3.)"

Now, however true this may be, we believe that this is only a prelude of that which shall fully develop itself in the latter ages, which are thus horribly depicted to us, in which such doctrines are current, as the Apostle calls doctrines of devils, and of which we now see grievous instances.

With respect to the corrupt and erroneous doctrines, which in the times of the Apostles introduced and established a disgraceful manner of life, so that their adherents were not merely overtaken by a fault, but

sinned from principle in a horrible manner ; we are not more minutely acquainted with the nature of them than what is intimated to us in the words just quoted of him who has the two-edged sword ; namely, that they inculcated the eating of things sacrificed to idols, and the commission of fornication ; for both were and still are connected with ancient and modern idolatry. They were, therefore, people who mingled heathenism and Christianity together, to the great prejudice of the latter, of which these impure spirits retained only so much as could consist with their impure carnal sentiments, and even abused its precepts to excuse and justify their ungodliness. This was particularly the case with one sect, which taught that they sinned not, do what they would ; and led such a shameful life, that they gave the heathen sufficient occasion to vilify Christians in general as evil-doers, which *they* were in reality, in a high degree. It was *they* who forsook the assembling of themselves together, perverted grace into licentiousness, wilfully continued in sin, because they were under grace ; maintained, in a horrible sense, that to the pure all things are pure, whilst they were impure and defiled both in heart and conscience, so that law, gospel, and every thing else became impure to them. Even the Apostles and the first teachers of the church had great trouble with these people, and were compelled to impress upon the churches the necessity of expelling such wicked characters from the midst of them. Peter, in particular, speaks very warmly against them, when he says, “ The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of

uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children; which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the ways of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of

righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb: The dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter ii. 9—22.) And in the following chapter, he concludes with the words, "But ye, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (Ch. iii. 17, 18.)

If such dreadful things occurred in the first and second century after Christ, at a time when the Apostles themselves and apostolical men still lived and laboured, preached, warned, and entreated, what was to be expected in the sequel, and what is still to be expected in these latter times, in which a woe is pronounced upon the earth, because Satan is come down to it in great wrath? Balaam's history is, therefore, highly remarkable in a typical sense.

But let us proceed to the consideration of the narrative itself, and, first of all, contemplate Balaam, the principal person, who is several times mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures, but after Moses, only by Micah in the Old. By Peter he is called a prophet, and he really uttered most remarkable predictions, which extend to the latest period of time. He has spoken so admirably of Christ, that, in this particular, he is behind none of the prophets, and excels the most of them. The people of Christ are represented in an uncommonly glorious point of view by him, as blessed,

victorious, invincible, and as God's property. Notwithstanding all this, his heart was not sincere before God, but a mass of unrighteousness, covetousness, and full of gall and subtlety: he had not been born again, and therefore was not a child of God. For, in that case, he would have been a good tree, which bore no such evil fruit as that which we find upon him, and according to which we must judge of the tree, as Christ directs us. He possessed very sublime knowledge, as his speeches prove, which, on that account, are called proverbs, like the sayings of Solomon. He speaks of himself as one who possessed the knowledge of the Most High, and the vision of the Almighty. Even the name of Jehovah is known to him. He boasts of having his eyes open when falling into a trance. It is also a striking circumstance, that when Balaam says, "having his eyes open," he uses a word which may also be rendered closed, in which sense we find it employed in Lam. iii. 8, "he shutteth out my prayer." Was this prophet, perhaps, in that singular state called "*clair-voyance*," into which individuals in modern times have been translated, when they said and saw things which, in their natural state, they were unable to do and see? And is the expression, "the Spirit of God came upon him," to be understood only as implying, that Balaam was transported into that enigmatical state of lucid vision, in which he saw with his eyes closed, and felt, whilst his body was in a state of torpor? The individuals of whom I speak, have also said very extraordinary things, which no one can say from mere natural powers: they have even prophesied, and, at the same time, conducted themselves very sacredly, testified a great abhorrence of certain sins

and persons who were infected with them, and yet showed that this demeanour had no root in their own sentiments. These people have also been employed as oracles, and things endeavoured to be learned from them, which either ought not to be known at all, or at least not in this hazardous and dubious way.

Balaam had also to do with divination, though at length he commended the people of Israel for having no enchanter or sorcerer amongst them; even as it is nothing uncommon for people to attack those vices more especially, to which they are themselves the most addicted. And the ancient writers, who speak of the ungodly sect in the first and second centuries, we have already noticed, tell us, that they likewise devoted themselves to all kinds of enchantments.

But there is also a subtle species of sorcery, to which Paul alludes, when he asks the Galatians who bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth. And doubtless the old serpent, from whom divination and enchantment derive their origin, as well as sin in general, is very active in promoting error, evil, and abuse of the truth; of whom it is said, in Rev. xii. 9, that he deceiveth the whole world. We will, however, leave the subject to rest upon its own merits.

The prophet who imagined himself so wise, is, in the end, humbled by his own ass, whose eyes God opened before his, to see what was hidden from him; so that without it, notwithstanding his supposed superior vision, he would unconsciously have plunged himself into the jaws of certain destruction.

In this remarkable individual we notice a strikingly intimate intercourse with God. God speaks with him in an extraordinary manner, and Balaam converses

with God. This generally took place during the night. But did not God speak also to wicked Cain? Did not Saul fall into a state in which he prophesied? Did not God, in the case of Ahab's prophets, employ a false spirit, which induced them to prophesy in a manner which occasioned the death of that monarch? Did not God speak with Satan himself concerning Job? and did not Caiaphas utter a true and important prediction, which did not proceed from himself, but was the consequence of the office he filled?

Balaam had also some knowledge of God, and bore especially an excellent testimony to his truth and unchangeableness. He joined with it a degree of slavish religiousness, so that he declared to the messengers of Balak, that "if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the Lord his God, to do more or less." He did not, however, say, "I will not," but "I cannot." It was a matter of constraint with him. He was obliged against his will, however hard it was for him, to refuse the gifts of Balak. But service, in which the will is not engaged, is not acceptable to God, in whose sight love alone avails, by which faith works. John, indeed, says, "Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not, and *cannot* sin." But this is a blissful inability, inseparably united with unwillingness, and Balaam did not possess a spark of it. He was under divine constraint, and serves to show us, that without the will of God, no creature can move or operate. However gladly he would have spoken differently, yet Balaam was unable to say that which he would, and was compelled to say that which he would not, and even to will against his will. Paul tells us, that of ourselves we are insuffi-

cient to think any thing as of ourselves ; and Solomon, "The preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord ;" and again, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps ;" without mentioning many other similar passages. What have we therefore to do in the end with men, whoever they are, mighty, wicked, prudent, strong, or with the creature in general, since out of God they are nothing ?

It is very remarkable, that a prophet, thus endowed, should show himself at the last, and shortly before the Israelites entered upon the possession of the promised land, after the two tribes and a half had really obtained their inheritance in a preliminary manner. Therefore, if Balak is an image of Antichrist, who endeavours to extirpate the people of God, Balaam is a type of the false prophet spoken of in Rev. xiii., who is still to be expected, but who shall be destroyed. We may, perhaps, return to this subject, but at present content ourselves with the general remark, that things may manifest themselves in individuals, which are apparently good, and even great and extraordinary, and yet are not genuine and of the proper kind ; as well as that, on the contrary, there may be little of outward appearance, and yet that which is true and genuine may exist ; and it may be said of the cluster of grapes, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." (Isa. lxxv. 8.) Hence self-examination is so urgently enjoined upon us ; and David even prays, in order to be secured from self-deception, that God himself would mercifully search and try him, and know his thoughts, lest there should be any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting. How easy, how dangerous, must therefore self-deception be !

The Holy Scriptures afford us remarkable instances to prove that what is real and genuine may be wanting, however specious the appearances may be. Samuel bears Saul witness, that he was little in his own eyes, when he said, "My family is the least of all the families of the tribes of Benjamin." But when Samuel said this to him, he was so no longer; a proof that he had not really been so before. Paul twice gives the salutation of Demas, once to the Colossians, and afterwards to Philemon, but at length informs Timothy that he had again become attached to the present world, and mentions also several others, who had made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Between the wise and the foolish virgins, there was outwardly no difference discoverable; and there are people who say to Jesus, "Lord! Lord!" and will plead with him on that day, saying, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? Have we not cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom he will answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!" There are many excellent divines who understand the words of the Apostle merely as shadow without substance, when, in Heb. vi., he speaks of people who have been once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and adds, "If they shall fall away." John also speaks of those antichristians who went out from them, and must therefore have been previously with them. He adds, however, "They were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but that it might be manifest that they

were not all of us." Much will be revealed only in eternity, before the judgment-seat of Christ.

But let us pass from general to particular observations, and notice some things, which, notwithstanding their correct and religious appearance, may be spurious. For instance, with reference to knowledge, which Peter confesses that some possess, but says that they are so little amended by it, "that it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment; for if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Saviour, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Paul supposes it possible for a man to be able to prophecy, to have all knowledge, and to know all mysteries, and yet be nothing. Christ himself makes a great distinction between knowledge and reality, when he says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." But Paul denies that many of the Corinthians had the true knowledge, although possessed of that which puffeth up, and says, "I say this to your shame."

The consciousness of sin, also, may be in many cases spurious, together with the repentance which is felt and expressed at it. Saul sinned, and David sinned, and both confessed it with the same words, and said, "I have sinned!" David was forgiven, but not Saul; so different, notwithstanding the similarity of expression, was the nature of their confession of sin. Peter sinned as well as Judas. Peter's repentance manifested itself by bitter tears, Judas by open recantation. The former was accepted, the latter

rejected ; so insufficient was the nature of his repentance, however deeply felt.

Faith may also be spurious. When Simon the sorcerer perceived how many men and women in Samaria believed through the preaching of Philip, concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptized, he also believed and was baptized. Peter, however, recognized him to be one whose heart was not right in the sight of God, but who was still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Jesus himself compares some of the hearers of the word to stony ground, in which the seed soon springs up, but has no root, so that when the sun is hot it withers away ; and says, in his explanation of the parable, " He that received seed into stony places, is one that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while ; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended ;" whilst those only are saved, who endure to the end ; and it is therefore necessary to be rooted in Christ, in order to overcome in every temptation.

What is more needful or useful than prayer ? Nevertheless, every thing is not prayer which is regarded as such, and assumes the name. We may pray, and yet pray amiss. The mouth of truth terms much that others call prayer, vain babbling, and even says that many, who for a pretence make long prayers, shall receive the greater condemnation. Generally speaking, the Holy Scriptures teach us how indispensable and salutary prayer is, so that he who asks not, receives nothing ; that we know not what to pray for as we ought, but have reason to say with the disciples,

“ Lord, teach us to pray !” and that for the proper exercise of prayer we require the Spirit of grace and supplication. Let us not suppose that we are able of ourselves to perform it, for we should only deceive ourselves. The Pharisee prayed, and the publican also. The prayer of the latter was accepted, but not that of the former ; the reason of which lay in the nature of their prayers, not in a mere decision of the will.

What is in itself more lovely, or more salutary in its effects, than true joy ? if it be only joy in the Lord, which is bestowed after previous repentance and faith ; when it withdraws the heart from the world and sin, allures to a total and unconditional surrender of ourselves to the Lord, makes us willing and fitted for every good work, and renders us lowly and humble ? But the mouth of truth itself teaches us that there may be a false religious joy, when he says, “ they receive the word with joy, and yet fall away.”

Finally, a person may lead a blameless life, be orthodox in his opinions, zealous in his profession, laudable in his deportment, a friend of the church, beneficent towards the poor, and kind to those that require his assistance, without being able to furnish a sufficient proof of the genuineness of his religion. With all this, he may be a whited sepulchre, blind, dead in sins, without Christ, and without grace, nay, even a bitter enemy to it.

But what is to be done in such critical circumstances, where self-deception is so easily possible and so frequent ? Dig deep. Do not be satisfied with what is shallow and superficial, with reference either to the knowledge of yourselves or to the gospel and its grace, and your part in it. Be humble, and mistrust your-

selves. However genuine your repentance, faith, &c. may be, many impurities still adhere to them. And he that trusts upon what he finds in himself, depends upon the creature, and not upon the Creator and giver, and makes flesh his arm. Do not be afraid of becoming thoroughly acquainted with yourselves, for there is medicine for every disease. Supposing it were the case that the whole of your religion were found to be without a basis, *he* still lives who can give you the true one. Do not reject every doubt of the goodness of your state as emanating from Satan. It may also proceed from the Holy Spirit, and be very salutary to you. But, finally, turn as lost and wandering sheep in yourselves, to him who seeks and saves that which is lost, since it continues a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "Look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth!" Amen.

XII.

BALAAM AND HIS ASS.

NUMB. xxii. 14—35.

“ And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

“ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

“ And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor. Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me :

“ For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me : come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

“ And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

“ Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.

“ And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them ; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

“ And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

“ And God's anger was kindled because he went ; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

“ And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand ; and the ass turned aside out

of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

“ But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

“ And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again.

“ And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

“ And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

“ And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

“ And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

“ And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

“ Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

“ And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me.

“ And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times; unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

“ And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

“ And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”

IF all the words of Christ are important, those are especially so, and at the same time extremely appropriate, which Luke has recorded in chap. xvii. 3, and which are contained in the expression, "Take heed to yourselves." This important admonition he addressed to his disciples, to whom he had said, in the first verse of that chapter, "It is impossible but that offences will come." This injunction to take heed to ourselves presupposes liability to danger from things which, in consequence of their specious appearance, are only the more perilous. They are things which it is impossible to get rid of, for the danger is concealed; not in one particular thing, or in many, since nothing is free from it. "Take heed to yourselves," therefore. The injunction is intended to guard us against falling into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts; and to enable us to pass through every thing safely and without injury; and after having done all, to stand in the evil day.

It is beyond a doubt, that such a line of conduct is necessary for the disciples of Christ; for they are still *in* the world although they are not *of* the world. It is highly necessary and indispensable, in order to avoid being taken in the snare of the devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The utility of such a procedure is equally evident. For what can be more useful than to preserve ourselves from sustaining injury, and attending to our own advantage? But is it practicable? If it had not been so, Jesus would not have enjoined it. It is only necessary that our hearts be humbled, and acknowledge that they cannot preserve themselves pure and sincere; that there be no secret understanding in us with the

evil one; that we have recourse to the Lord by prayer, and especially, that we believe in the Lord. It is for this reason that the disciples pray, at the close of the fifth verse, saying, "Lord, increase our faith!" To which the Lord replied, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." It is therefore in the exercise of faith that we manifest watchfulness. May the Lord incite us both to the one and the other by that portion of his word which we are about to consider more closely!

God had forbidden Balaam to travel to king Balak, who intended to make use of him for the purpose of cursing Israel. A singular intention this! Force of arms had been unable to accomplish any thing against this people; he therefore now seeks to employ invisible, mysterious, and spiritual weapons; and expects more from the words of a single individual than from a whole army. Is it any thing else than superstition, when effects are expected from causes which, in the natural course of things, cannot produce them? Or was there, in this instance, something more than mere words; something real? If Balaam cursed Israel, might the consequences have been injurious to the latter, or would it have been, as Solomon says, "The curse causeless shall not come?" I will not attempt to decide the point. Did the whole affair lie in the superstition of those hoary ages, as we meet with similar instances in all uncultivated nations, or was there a reality in the matter? I do not know. When Solomon says, "A father's blessing establisheth the houses of children; but a mother's curse rooteth out founda-

tions," it is another matter. When the New Testament enjoins us to bless them that curse us, we have at the same time a proof that the execrations of the wicked are of no effect. Amongst Christians, a tendency formerly manifested itself for what is called theosophy, which affects to be something particular in religion, with which alchemy and other injurious arts were connected. How necessary, therefore, that we adhere in simplicity to the way of salvation pointed out in our catechism, and which consists in three things; first, the consciousness of the greatness of our sin and misery; secondly, how we may be delivered from it; and, thirdly, how we may express our gratitude to God for such a deliverance; we shall then neither soar too high, nor sink too low; do neither too little nor too much in the matter; and be kept from straying either to the right hand or the left; for we shall hear a voice behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

It is, however, remarkable, that God condescends to notice the formal cursing of Israel, to which Balak is desirous of hiring Balaam, as having the ability to do so; but which the Lord will not permit. The question might be asked, "Why not? God might have let him curse as much as he pleased, and have continued to bless." Certainly he might have acted thus, even as he suffered Shimei to curse David; although, in the present instance, it was to be done with more formality, and by the mouth of a prophet. And it was on this very account that God would not permit it. He would not allow the people whom he had blessed to be so formally and openly cursed by a prophet, even though he were a false one; nor suffer the heathen nations to form such an idea of the people of Israel, and even of

their God, that he was changeable; or that what he before had blessed, he afterwards cursed; since the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He was also willing to spare his people the trial of their faith, which was by no means a slight one, of cleaving closely to the promised blessing, of which they had so frequently rendered themselves so very unworthy, in opposition to the execrations which a prophet was to utter against them in the name of God. On the contrary, the hostile intrigues of Balak were destined to afford a glorious invigoration to their faith, and render their distinguished privileges, as the beloved people of the Lord, more apparent to them than ever. God's intentions were as kind to them as those of Balak were evil.

Balak had a more correct view of the matter than any other of the heathen kings. He believed that a people which stood under the particular protection of Jehovah, could not be overcome by mere earthly might. He believed, likewise, that the words of a prophet, whether uttered in blessing or in cursing, must have their effect. His people worshipped an abominable and filthy idol, named Baal-peor. But the king placed his dependence neither on the idol nor its priests. He sent, therefore, to a prophet, who worshipped the supreme God, whom Lot, his progenitor, Abraham's nephew, had also worshipped, and in a place where, consequently, much knowledge of the true God might have been preserved; and this was also the case with Balaam. Balak, who, probably, worshipped no God, wished to make use of religion, and this its minister, for the promotion of the objects of his government, as well as for an instru-

ment of his hatred against Israel. He imagined that a prophet might be employed at pleasure, as that messenger also supposed, who at the request of Jehoshaphat, was sent to call the true prophet Micaiah to Ahab, and who said to him on the way, "Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king, with one assent; let thy word, therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good." (2 Chron. xviii. 12.) The Midianites, from whom Moses had taken his wife, made common cause with Balak, and an embassy was sent to Balaam, with the reward of divination in their hands, which reward was customary; on which account Saul, also, was in a dilemma with regard to Samuel, because he had not with him sufficient to recompense him for the intelligence he gave him respecting the lost asses, of which he was in quest.

The first time he is put to the test, Balaam acts with considerable propriety. He examines the offer which had been made him in the presence of God, and inquires how he ought to act. The Lord replies, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." This prohibition was contrary to the wishes of the prophet, because it was opposed to his avarice and ambition, which were his bosom sins, and which he would rather have gratified, than follow the revealed will of God, who hated the carnal-mindedness of his heart, particularly with reference to his love of money and dignity. Balaam, therefore, gave the messengers an answer, such as still left hope to himself and them. "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you," said he, giving' them, at the same time, to understand, that for his part, he would

otherwise have gladly done so. Neither did he say a word to them, by which they might infer, that the people were blessed, and therefore could not be successfully cursed.

Thus highly favoured are the people, and those individuals whom God has blessed. He is the God, whose name is Amen, and not yea and nay, but all yea in Christ. No weapon which is formed against them by the most formidable agency, without his concurrence, shall prosper. But observe, also, in what danger our bosom sins, and those of our natural temperament, may entangle us, since they are those to which we are the most inclined. Woe unto those, between whom and some particular sin there is a secret understanding, and whose hearts are not right in the sight of God!

The envoys clearly comprehend the crafty prophet. His love of money, his inclination to accumulate riches, his readiness to accompany them, and his dissatisfaction with God were sufficiently obvious to them. For others frequently know and judge of us better than we ourselves, since we suffer ourselves to be blinded by self-love. They returned home, and their king perceived that more dignified messengers, and richer presents were requisite, in order to render the prophet willing to do every thing that was desired of him. Hence, when he obeyed the second invitation, Balak said to him, "Am I not able, indeed, to promote thee to honour?" He had also assured him of this by the second embassy, saying, "I will promote thee to very great honour." Honour, pleasure, and riches are certainly three powerful temptations, to which every one succumbs, who is not pure in heart, and

rooted in Christ by faith, so as to receive from him all the divine power he requires. Without this he cannot stand; or rather, without this, he falls from one temptation into another; and the next is worse than the preceding one. We see this exemplified in Balaam. Ought not the divine injunction, not to go with the people, to have been, once for all, sufficient? Ought he not to have looked upon himself as his worst enemy; have prayed, struggled, and cried to God against himself? But, alas! he had not the love of God in him; he was not of the truth; he clung to wealth and fame—these were his gods, which he served, as he ought to have served the living God, who could say with infinitely more propriety than Balak, “Dost thou suppose that I am not able to promote thee to honour, however much thou mayest have to abandon?”

On the second embassy, Balaam shows himself still more prominently in his true colours, whilst God retires more into the back ground. If the word of the Lord can become to a man like that which he himself is, (Isa. xxviii. 9—13,) so can God himself likewise, who “with the pure shows himself pure, and with the froward shows himself froward.” (Psalm xviii. 26.) Therefore, “he that is holy, let him be holy still.” (Rev. xxii. 11.) That which a man has, can also be taken from him; and he who sins contrary to better knowledge, and against conscience, stands in the same rank with Balaam. He tempts God, and God tempts him in return, according to his custom. He ventures to ask God once more how he ought to act, although God had told him clearly enough that the people were blessed, and that he ought not to

let himself be employed to curse them. He treats God as if he were a changeable being; and the Lord, in his righteous displeasure against the prophet, appears to him as if he really were so. He now says to him, "Go with them." This was to him a most welcome intimation, it opened out to him the fairest prospect of wealth and honour, and afforded him heartfelt pleasure. Therefore, in the earliest dawn of the morning, he hastened to get ready his ass, and to take his departure with the Moabitish princes, attended by two of his servants. The Jews say, that these servants were Jannes, and Jambres, mentioned by the Apostle (2 Tim. iii. 8.) as those two arch enchanters, who withstood Moses in Egypt. Truly, a precious escort!

It may be easily supposed, how contemptible Balaam must have rendered himself and God in the eyes of the Midianitish princes, since they could not think otherwise than that the prophet, as well as his God, might be had for money, if only a sufficient price were offered. God takes such a neglect of his honour much amiss; and we have to beware of this, both in thought, word, and deed, and render unto God what is his. He honours them that honour him, but they that despise him, he will also lightly esteem. Whosoever is ashamed of Jesus, and his words, of him will he also be ashamed, when he shall appear in his glory. But whosoever confesses him before men, him will he also confess before his heavenly Father. It is a severe reproof which Paul gives to the Jews, when he tells them, that the name of God is every where blasphemed amongst the heathen because of them. Would to God the same could not be said of Christians!

But the honour of God is to be rescued by means of this very journey of Balaam's, whilst the latter falls a victim to the vengeance of the divine jealousy. Had he feared the Lord sincerely, that of which David sings in Psalm xxv. 8, 9, would have been fulfilled in him. "He teacheth sinners in the way; the meek he guides in judgment, and teaches the humble his way." But because he was so crafty and disobedient, he was led on a path which was right on the part of God, but was to him like slippery ice, on which he received a mortal fall. "The paths of the Lord are right; the just shall walk therein, but the transgressors shall fall in them." To those only who fear the name of the Lord, and hope in his goodness, are the Lord's ways mercy and truth. Uprightness is pleasing in his sight. Balaam rode away with a thoughtless and cheerful heart; but the wrath of God impended over him, like a heavy storm. Instead of its being his chief concern how he might escape it, he gave himself no trouble about it, but only felt pleased that he was on the way to obtain a large portion of wealth and honour. He loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked (according to 2 Peter ii. 16.) for his iniquity; "the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet." He thought himself wise; but what a fool was he, and all who, like him, prefer wealth, pleasure, and fame, to the grace of God; the narrow span of this life to eternity, and who resist God's will in order to do their own! O, folly of the vilest kind! It forbad him; but, alas! he suffered himself not to be restrained, but continued his way, under the dreadful idea of resisting it. "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not

planted, shall be rooted up." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire."

It was his ass which forbad his folly, when on the point of being punished with death by the sword of the angel. But it turned aside, as long as it was able, otherwise Balaam would have fallen under the uplifted sword of the angel, whom, notwithstanding his boasting of having his eyes open, he saw not, although the stupid ass saw him. For an angel had placed himself in the way, with a drawn sword in his hand. In a singular manner the animal saw this majestic and dreadful figure, whilst its rider was unconscious of it. The ass, as animals do, turned aside from this brilliant form, as long as it was able. Balaam smote it, to force it to continue in the way, and smote it the second time still more violently, because, in endeavouring to avoid the angel, it crushed his foot against the wall. At length it could no longer turn aside from the angel, and fell down, although the irritated prophet beat it severely, and endeavoured to force it to run with him into the consuming fire of the angelic nature, which would not have injured it, but would have caused his death.

But now the hour was come, when the supernatural cause of the animal's behaviour, which was otherwise so faithful to him, was to be revealed to him. Whilst striking the ass, the angel, who stood near, opened its mouth. It speaks to its master, who, instead of being struck with amazement at such an unheard of event, answers, and even threatens it with death, instead of reflecting whether he could not learn something from the uncommon occurrence. But alas! do

not similar things take place frequently? What remarkable events occur, both in public and in private life, from whence the most important lessons might be learnt, which happen so near us, and urge themselves, as it were, upon us! War is carried on, peace is made, the seasons are fruitful or unfruitful, misfortunes and deliverances occur, remarkable cases of mortality and recovery are related to us, epidemic diseases appear and retire; but mankind continue as they were, impenitent, unbelieving, devoted to that which is evil, and averse to that which is good. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah i. 3.) O, what a quickening and all-pervading divine power is requisite to restore rebellious man to another path! How must it penetrate, even into his inmost soul, since every thing of an external nature proves ineffectual, were it even more remarkable than audible words from a senseless brute! But God be praised for working in us, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure, and for thus enabling us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling!

Balaam had alighted from his fallen ass in great wrath. But the Lord now opened the prophet's eyes, as well as the ass's mouth. Though he had not felt alarmed at its rational and connected discourse, yet he was so much the more horrified at what he now beheld; for he saw opposite to him the angel of the Lord, with a naked sword, turned towards him, standing directly in the way, which his beast, fortunately for him, refused to take. He now found himself humbled beneath his beast, and compelled, not only to say with Agur, "Surely I am more brutish than

any man, and have not the understanding of a man ;” and with Asaph, “ I was as a beast before thee,” but also to confess, that he had less understanding and penetration than his ass. But what availed these humiliations? for though he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face, in deep confusion, yet they did not reach his heart. There lay the arrogant prophet beside his ass, which he was ready to have slain, at the feet of the angel with the sword, waiting to see whether he would not make use of it to slay him upon the spot. What a great occasion for the profoundest humiliation ; although it failed in producing such a desirable effect, as an evidence of the incorrigibility of human nature, when the change does not begin within. It is within that sin lurks, and God must, therefore, operate within.

The angel addresses the prophet, thus prostrate before him, and says, “ I am come out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me.” Joshua also saw this angel, and said unto him, “ Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” to which he answered, “ Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come”—therefore for us ; and then we must succeed. He was also seen by Gideon, who built him an altar, and called him the God of peace. The way of both these two was right in the sight of the Lord, and hence he was with them. Happy are all they who, in whatever circumstances they may be placed, are inclined and impelled to say with Gideon, “ If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us ?”

Balaam confesses, and says, “ I have sinned.” But how little was he conscious of his sin, or perceived

that his whole way, his whole sentiments, and entire mode of procedure, were improper! And yet such an insight into our sinfulness is requisite, in order that it be perfect. He probably thought chiefly on the wrathful, and certainly blameable treatment of his ass, which, notwithstanding, was of little importance in the end. Just as slightly do mankind think of their sins, if the Holy Spirit does not convince them of them; and hence it is, that they either do not seek for grace at all, or in such a manner that it is little better than not at all. Hence we do not hear Balaam penitently supplicate the forgiveness of his sins, nor pray for grace and mercy; he is not greatly afraid, like Hezekiah, so as to chatter like a swallow, or mourn like a dove; he does not say with David, "Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins!" In short, there is nothing in his conduct becoming a child of God. His will remains the same, though it is chiefly this, which is changed by real regeneration, so that it hates that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. His attachment to the world still exists in all its predominance; but because he is aware that this might endanger his life, he says, "If it displease thee, I will get me back again." But God is not satisfied with such unwilling and constrained service. Hence the angel says, with displeasure, "Go with the men!" even as the Lord once said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." And Balaam went on to his own destruction, and was obliged to utter what the Lord commanded his disobedient soul.

Let us close this section of the history of Balaam with the following remarks. First, we derive from it additional information with respect to that which we

really are by nature. This prophet's heart differed in no respect from our own, and we have just the same heart as he. "Man's heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." How much reason, therefore, have we to abandon all confidence in our own wisdom, strength, and worthiness; and even utterly to condemn all that is within us! Secondly, Who is to change this heart? Who else but the almighty covenant God? He can do it, he alone, and most assuredly. And he is equally willing and certain to do it, for he has promised it. Therefore, whilst thus abandoning, and even abominating all self-confidence, let us place our hopes entirely on his grace in Christ Jesus, and exclaim, with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

XIII.

ISRAEL'S GLORY.

NUMB. xxii. 36—41 ; xxiii. 1—10.

“ And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast.

“ And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee ? Wherefore camest thou not unto me ? Am I not able indeed to promote thee unto honour ?

“ And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee ; have I now any power at all to say any thing ? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

“ And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.

“ And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam and the princes that were with him.

“ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

“ And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

“ And Balak did as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar, a bullock and a ram.

“ And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go ; peradventure the Lord will come to meet me ; and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

“ And God met Balaam ; and he said unto him, I have pre-

pared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.

“And the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

“And he returned unto him, and lo! he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

“And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Arnon, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

“How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?

“For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

“Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

WITH the present day, the season of Advent commences, a period of which mention began to be made early in the fifth century after the birth of Christ, and during which, the coming of Christ in the flesh, as the supreme gift of God, is particularly the subject of discourse, with the intention of inciting us to make a proper use of this best and greatest gift. The church was exercised during a long period—a period of four thousand years, in waiting for this gift. Thus the impotence of the flesh, and the necessity of a Redeemer was powerfully shown. The desire of the faithful for his actual appearance became increasingly ardent, and their confidence that the promise would still be manifestly fulfilled, and that he would certainly appear who was to come and would not tarry, was greatly exercised. During this long period of expectation, the characteristics of the Redeemer, and the nature of the

redemption he should accomplish, were previously made known in a variety of ways, in order that the Redeemer, at his coming, might be the more clearly recognized, and thus a greater certainty be afforded to faith. Truly, four thousand years was a long time to wait! And who can feel surprised that the church occasionally felt discouraged; that she sometimes complained, saying, "Mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God!" that she inquired, "Watchman, what of the night?" and prayed, "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and come down!" And is not the church, both collectively and individually, still continually exercised in waiting; and does it not also long for the manifestation of the children of God? It frequently seemed as if the promise was of none effect. Cain, respecting whom the mother of us all entertained such great hopes, proved himself to be a murderer, from whom the ruin and not the building up of the church was to be expected. When Abraham received the promise, he had neither a son, nor the rational hope of obtaining one; and when he had gotten a son, it was not the right one; and when he had the right one, he was ordered to sacrifice him. In Egypt the promise was again in the greatest danger of being annihilated, together with the whole race; and at the Red Sea the danger was repeated. When the Jews were carried away captive to Babylon, it seemed again as if there were an end to the promise; and when the seed of the woman was really born, Herod soon after had nearly put him to death, and the latter actually ensued thirty years after. But the truth of God continues triumphant.

Let it, therefore, not seem inopportune to you if I

claim your attention, on the first day of Advent, to the history of Balaam; you will, perhaps, not regard it as entirely inappropriate, particularly when you hear him praising the truth of God and the glory of his people.

Balaam had departed with the envoys of Balak, apparently with the divine sanction. It was not, however, the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God which permitted him to proceed, but his wrathful and long-suffering will. The princes, who had been sent, came before him to the king, and informed him that the prophet was on the way. The king showed him extraordinary honour; for he went out a good distance to meet him, and received him in the city of Arnon, at the furthest extremity of his territories. This must have caused heartfelt pleasure to the ambitious prophet, who, in all his life, had never been honoured in such a manner. But how easily are earthly sweets embittered, and ashes mingled with dainties! Balak, whilst welcoming him, adds a sarcastic remark, when saying to him, "Wherefore camest thou not unto me immediately on my sending for thee? Didst thou imagine I was unable duly to honour thee? Dost thou not now perceive the contrary?" O, proud monarch, thou art nevertheless much too poor to compensate Balaam in any degree for his disobedience, and for the grace of God he has trifled away! He was far from obtaining the whole world from thee; and if he had really obtained it, what would it have availed him, since he injured his own soul in thy service? But if God thus addresses us, and says, "Thinkest thou not, that I am able to reward thee?" something very different is implied. If, for his sake, we even part with

honour, wealth, property, and that which is the most valuable to us in the world, yet we receive it back again a hundred and a thousand fold. But ah, how few are the eyes which see this, and the hearts which apprehend it! The majority are satisfied, like Balaam, when brilliant prospects for this world present themselves to them, and are deceived and cheated like him. And what then remains for them?

Balaam, however, is secretly afraid of being eventually unable to obtain so much from Balak as he desired; since he well knew, that he should be able to say nothing but what God would have him. Hence he makes use of a hypocritical reservation and excuse. He assures the king of his readiness to serve him, and to do according to his will to the utmost nicety; but with respect to the result, he could not pledge himself; for against his will, he should be compelled to speak that which God put into his mouth; in which he therefore participated as little as his ass, in what she spoke, when the Lord opened her mouth. In such a way did this crafty individual endeavour to make sure of his reward, and to cause the king beforehand not to attach blame to him, but to God. O sagacious Balaam, thy false heart is not aware that true wisdom consists in simplicity and sincerity! Wind about like a snake, yet Balak will dismiss thee in a few days, with displeasure, and say, "I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but lo! the Lord hath kept thee back from honour. I will give thee nothing, therefore get thee gone to the place from whence thou camest."

Every thing besides God is miserable deception. How wicked are mankind! They gladly lay the blame of every evil, every misfortune, and even of their sins

upon God. But they are unwilling to call upon him, or to thank him as the author of all that is good. There are individuals so reprobate, as even to charge God with being the cause of their remaining unconverted; not as though they were desirous of being converted, but because they are resolved upon accusing his supreme Majesty of injustice, if he were to punish them. O ye serpents and generation of vipers!

Balak and Balaam, full of good hopes against Israel, proceed together to Kirjath-huzoth; Street-town, called so, because individuals of various nations dwelt in their separate streets, of which we have also an instance in 1 Kings xx. 34. In the Israelitish camp, probably nothing was known of the weapons which were being formed against them, and they laid themselves down and slept in peace, for the Lord sustained them. But had they known it, how would they have prayed, supplicated, and believed, that their God was an eternal rock, and that they who trust in him shall never be confounded. How many an unseen storm may approach towards us, which is dispelled by the power of God, before we are aware of it; since we know that the accuser of the brethren accuseth them day and night. How needful and comprehensive is the petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!" more so, indeed, than we can conceive.

They now betook themselves to their work; the object of which was Israel's ruin, in a quarter from which the latter suspected nothing. Balak offers sacrifice, and then sends for the prophet, whom he conducts to an eminence, from whence he could survey the whole Israelitish encampment. It must indeed have been a

splendid sight. The camp formed an extensive square, each side of which consisted of three tribes, with the tent of their captain and his banner in front; that of Judah bore a lion. The pleasing names of the captains, we have considered on a former occasion. Let me here mention only four of them. ABIDAN, my father is my judge, AHIESER, my brother is my helper. SELUMIEL, God is my peace. ZURISHADDAI, the all-sufficient is my fortress. Under such leaders, success may well be expected. The tabernacle, with the golden mercy-seat, stood in the midst, as a testimony that the covenant of grace, instituted in paradise, was not abrogated by the law; and the twelve tribes, like chickens about the parent hen, round about. Above it rose a lofty tower, the symbol of the real presence of the Son of God, whom God had given for a covenant to the people—the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. There the daily sacrifices were offered—these constant references to Christ. This camp is a type of Christ and his church, which is also described in the Revelations of John as a great and perfect square, particularly as it reveals itself in its glory. This quadrate form very correctly represents the church; for it reaches into all the four quarters of the globe, and is increasingly extending. From whichever side it is viewed, it always strikes the eye as a square; in itself a perfect quadrature of wretchedness, if the term perfect can be applied to the latter; wretched in body and soul, in time and eternity, but in Christ as a perfect quadrature of glory, because he is its wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This square has four sharp angles, and is terrible as an army with banners. He who commences a hostile attack upon the church,

injures himself, not her; for, as Beza once said to the king of Navarre, she is like an anvil, on which many a hammer has been broken. Looking upon it from these angles, the square assumes the form of a triangle, and it is the triune God, who glorifies himself in the church.

It was this glorious camp which Balak, in our language, the destroyer, was desirous of cursing by Balaam, the devourer; and for this purpose, magical, but at the same time very serious, and even religious, preparations and arrangements were made. Balak first offered sacrifice alone, doubtless to his idol, in order to dispose him to be favourable to him. But Balaam ordered seven altars to be built, and offered upon each of them a bullock and a ram to Jehovah. He observed, at the same time, the remarkable number, seven, and manifested, by so doing, a good acquaintance with the patriarchal religion. But his sevenfold sacrifice was no better, but even worse, than Cain's offering. It was a worthless, and even an inimical sacrifice. It was not offered to God through faith in Christ; for had this been the case, the effect would have been love towards the children of God, whilst, in this instance, hatred was manifested against them: it was done from a principle of self-righteousness, which, by means of the offering up of fourteen brute beasts, sought to ingratiate itself with God, and acquire a species of meritoriousness. He was possessed of the miserable idea of bribing God, as it were, and of inducing him to do evil to his people. Balaam in this appears to me like the Romish high priest, who every Maundy Thursday curses, with great religious pomp, Luther, Calvin, and all Protestants, as heretics, whilst hurling a consecrated burning taper down from the balcony of

St. Peter's church, and wishing that they may be extinguished like that taper. But what has this ceremony hitherto injured us or profited him? Nothing; on the contrary, the curse rebounds upon his own head.

The prophet then acts a very mysterious part. He retires to some distance, to see whether the Lord will come to meet him. He ascends an eminence, and lo! God meets him there. What kind of a meeting this was, we cannot say; for it was a matter of experience of an entirely peculiar and prophetic nature. It was a very different meeting to that mentioned in Isaiah lxiv. 5, where it is said, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, and that remembereth thee in thy ways." This every believer experiences from time to time, when the Lord enlightens, comforts, and strengthens him in a particular manner. Be it as it may, God met Balaam in such a way, as to put the words he had to speak into his mouth, almost in the same manner as he had formerly done to his ass. God makes use of one as well as the other for the attainment of his objects; and Balaam knew what he had to say only at the moment of uttering it.

He now begins his speech. He makes the commencement by an introduction, in which he mentions his invitation and its object; after which follows the prediction or parable itself.

He first speaks in the general, when he says, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Admirable truth! It presupposes another glorious truth, of which it is the effect, the gospel truth, that the Lord neither curses his people, nor suffers them to be

cursed, and that he does not revile them, nor suffer them to be reviled and defied. Christ became a curse for them, to redeem them from the curse, and purchase for them the blessing. Who then shall curse them? It is Christ who was crucified. Who will revile, since he who was reviled for us, reviled not again? And even if God had suffered Balaam to curse to his heart's content, what would it have been more than an illegal act, which would have been attended with no further consequences than the destructive rebounding of the curse upon him who ventured to pronounce it? For cursed is he who curseth thee, O Jacob! and blessed is he who blesseth thee! "He is blessed, yea, and he shall be blessed," said Isaac, (Gen. xxvii. 33.) for in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified; and though the mountains should depart and the hills be removed, yet his loving-kindness shall not depart from him, nor the covenant of his peace be broken. Therefore what will the combined efforts of the adversaries of the church accomplish? Nothing. And thus Balaam's mouth is compelled to proclaim the glorious and immutably blissful state of Israel, for the consolation of the latter.

The inimical prophet now descends to particulars with respect to Israel, and says, "The people shall dwell alone." The Hebrew language has two words for people. The first gives us to understand a multitude of persons, particularly such as know not God; but the second, a people who know God, and live under the same code of laws, and are called to the enjoyment of the same blessings. The latter is called *AM*, the former *GOIM*. By the former, the people of God are always designated, And God controuls

the tongue of the hostile prophet so minutely, that he honours Israel with that appellation, but calls the other nations, Goim. For behold ! even the hairs of your head are all numbered, and “there is not a word on my tongue, but thou, Lord, knowest it altogether.” In every case it is finally manifest, what a distinction exists between those who fear God, and those who fear him not. At last, the glory of God’s people will be openly manifest to all, and all the wicked will stand exposed in the shame of their nakedness.

Respecting this elect and holy people, the inspired mouth of the prophet says further, “They shall not be reckoned among the Goim of the heathen.” We know that the whole salvation of this people depends upon this reckoning on their part, as well as on God’s. This is evident from those passages where it is said, “Reckon yourselves as dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Christ Jesus ; for we thus judge, or reckon, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Further, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing or reckoning their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.” God imputes or reckons the righteousness of Christ to faith ; and a number of passages of a similar import. But how are they reckoned, or do they reckon themselves, when they are complete in the faith ? As in Christ their divine head. This reckoning, together with its fruits, is the chief glory of Israel.

“The people shall dwell alone,” adds he, further. This is fulfilled in a literal sense in the Jewish people, who are minutely and strictly separated by their manners and customs from all other nations on the

face of the earth. This partition-wall has been broken down by the new covenant in the blood of Christ, and the law of ceremonies abrogated. But inwardly, the spiritual Israel of God is called, separated, and distinguished by word and spirit from all the rest of mankind; and the more closely they are united to Christ, the less are they able to harmonize with the men of the world. That the world cannot bear them is most evident, seeing that it often breaks out into revilings and violent persecutions. This separation in sentiment and conduct, as well as the unity of spirit in the bond of peace amongst believers, certainly needs and is capable of great addition, and flourishes the more that the old man decayeth; for then the new man is renewed day by day.

The prophet applauds the people, thirdly, on account of their numbers. "Who can count the dust of Jacob," says he, "and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" At that time this was an exaggeration; for, according to chap. xxvi., they were numbered, and the sum of them is given. But God speaks by the mouth of Balaam of the distant future, and not merely of Israel according to the flesh, but rather of the spiritual children of the father of all the faithful. John calls them a number which no man can number, out of every nation, people, and tongue. This number is continually on the increase, since such as are baptized and unbaptized are constantly added to the church, of those who believe, even as many as are ordained to eternal life. But the true ingathering still awaits us, when children shall be born to him like dew from the womb of the morning; and this figure not only intimates the manner in which they are brought forth,

but also their multitude. Isaiah compares them to the clouds which fly past us, and calls upon the church to lengthen the cords of her tent, and to strengthen the stakes of her dwelling. And though it may have been hitherto a little flock, and though there may be few who find the narrow way, yet in the end the number shall be as the stars for multitude. "Canst thou number them? So shall thy seed be," is the promise. O, happy are they who belong to them! this even Balaam perceived, and concludes with the wish, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." He gives the church of God its appropriate title, when he denominates those who compose it, righteous, which word also signifies acceptable and upright. This they really are, although it is not in and through ourselves that we become so, since we are incapable of ourselves of thinking any thing that is good. But, as Balaam says in the following prediction, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is amongst them." The people of God possess, by means of faith, a righteousness, the genuineness of which even enemies must acknowledge; for "every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." They are accepted in the beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace. They are upright and sincere, in consequence of regeneration.

Balaam justly considers their end and aim, or their last end, as extremely desirable. And it is, in reality, more so than we can imagine to ourselves here below. If they are obliged to suffer the privation of many things, as long as they sojourn in the present state of

existence, yet they will be abundantly compensated for it in the kingdom of his glory. Here, a cross; there, a crown. Here, afflictions of various kinds; there, an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. It is worth the while, O it is so, indeed! to be a Christian. Of this Balaam foreboded so much, as to excite in him the wish likewise to attain to this glorious aim. But it was nothing more than a morbid and idle wish, respecting which Solomon says, "The sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Who would not gladly die happy? and yet but few have a desire to live godly, although no one will die to the Lord but he who lives to the Lord. An earnest working out our salvation with fear and trembling, must take the place of a slothful, fruitless, hypocritical wishing; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. "Enter in at the strait gate; for I say unto you, that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Make of your wishes fervent prayers; for the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; unto all that call upon him in truth. Lay hold on eternal life. Hasten, and save your souls. Confer no longer with flesh and blood, but seek salvation now, that you may at length die the death of the righteous, and that your last end may be like theirs.

But "happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord? Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places!"

XIV.

ISRAEL'S BLESSEDNESS.

NUMB. xxiii. 13—21.

“ And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them : thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all, and curse me them from thence.

“ And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

“ And he said unto Balak, Stand here, by thy burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder.

“ And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

“ And when he came to him, behold he stood by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken ?

“ And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear ; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor :

“ God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent ; hath he said it, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ?

“ Behold, I have received commandment to bless ; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

“ He hath not beheld toil in Jacob, neither hath he seen labour in Israel (Luther's version) : the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.”

IN memory of the fatiguing journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness to Canaan, and in remembrance of the wonderful and gracious guidance of God during the whole of it, Moses not only enjoined the people to "remember all the way," but God himself instituted a week's festival, called the feast of tabernacles. We behold our Lord Jesus, on one occasion, at this feast, and hear him say, "Whosoever thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink." (John vii. 37.) It was on this festival in particular, that those who celebrated it were wont to sing and exclaim, "Hosannah!" They were also very cheerful, and had cause for being so. For five days before had been the great day of atonement, and the typical blood had been shed, by which they were typically purified. "Ye shall be clean from all your sins before the Lord." And he who is without sin may indeed be joyful.

This evening we hold our last Sunday meeting in the year. One day more, and this year, with its numerous days, will have disappeared in the sea of oblivion. We have reason, also, to remember the ways by which we have been led. If we look merely at ourselves on this occasion, we have, on our parts, nothing but sin to show. And even if thou art really able to point out much or any thing that is good, thou art not indebted for it to thyself, but to God and his grace; and besides this, thou hast defiled and polluted it in a variety of ways; so that Augustin expresses himself perhaps too mildly, when he calls the good works, even of Christians, pardonable sins. And what have you to show, who are not yet converted, and are therefore corrupt trees, thorns, and thistles? Nothing but evil fruit,

although, on account of your blindness, you are unable to see it. If, under these circumstances, and on an occasion like the present, we take a view of God merely as God, without a Mediator, in his essential holiness and justice, as sinners, we must feel terrified, and trembling come upon us; for who can dwell with devouring fire, or everlasting burnings? O be salutarily alarmed, therefore, ye sinners, at the new addition to your guilt, at the increased sum which will be laid to your charge in the divine book, and which must be paid, or you will eternally perish! But what will you give in order to redeem your souls? If he who offends only in one point is guilty of the whole law, how much more he who, to speak lightly, is daily guilty of new transgressions? This is a consideration which is extremely necessary for the majority of you. But to them that fear his name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings. Conclude and begin the year in the name of him who is the first and the last. Close it in the contemplation of the great day of atonement, when the sacrifice was offered which is of infinite value. Conclude and begin it in such a manner that you neither regard yourselves nor God out of Christ, but in him, and consequently as those who have no more conscience of their sins, because they have been purged away; and who have no more sin, since it is abrogated, together with its wages; and as those against whom there is no longer any hand-writing, since it has been nailed to the cross, and taken out of the way; and as those who are perfect in him. Continue, therefore, to place all your dependance on Christ. For he sees no toil, he will not suffer that Jacob be made to labour, or that mis-

fortune happen unto Israel ; for he beholds no iniquity in Jacob, and no unrighteousness in Israel. O blessed Israel ! In this thy glory the mouth even of the rebellious must praise thee.

We have already considered the first blessing which Balaam pronounced upon Israel. We will now attend to the second, which is still more excellent and sublime. Balak makes a new attempt to curse Israel by the prophet's means. This new attempt, and its results, we will at present take into consideration.

The king bitterly reproaches the prophet for the blessing he had uttered, by which he had acted in direct opposition to the object for which he had sent for him. " I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether ! " The prophet excuses himself in a remarkable manner, and assures the king that he blesses the people very unwillingly, and entirely against his wishes ; but that he is compelled to speak whatever the Almighty God puts into his mouth. He is forced to do it against his will, and to his great vexation, and therefore can do no otherwise. Looking at the matter in a rational point of view, one would have said, they ought both to have desisted from their purpose, since they clearly perceived that God himself was against them in an omnipotent manner. For to cause a rational man to say those things which are completely contrary to his will, can only be effected by a miracle of divine omnipotence. But so great is our enmity against God, that we do not bend to him under any other condition than that of his omnipotence manifesting itself in the character of grace to us, and making us partakers of the divine nature. Benefits, afflictions, and undeniable

convictions are otherwise lost and unavailing with respect to all of us.

Thus we see Balak making a new attempt, and the prophet consenting to it. The place and the view are changed. It was an open space, a watch tower, from whence there was a free and extensive prospect, and the scene of it was on the top of Pisgah. From thence the camp of the Israelites might be easily seen; but not in its whole extent. The king, who did not altogether believe what the prophet told him of the impossibility of speaking otherwise than he did, selected this place from motives of prudence. He was apprehensive that Balaam might be affected by the imposing sight of the spacious and splendid encampment of the Israelites, so as to lose courage to pronounce a curse upon them. This apprehension was excited in him by an expression which Balaam had let fall concerning the multitude of the children of Israel. A man may be thus prudent in worldly things, and yet at the same time so unbelieving and blind in those that are spiritual. Fourteen burnt-offerings were again offered upon seven altars, in order to bribe the God of Israel, as if he could be propitiated by the flesh of bulls and the fat of rams. But thus blind are mankind in the knowledge of God; for the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are foolishness unto him. What secret preparations were made against Israel in the kingdom of darkness! The Israelites are ignorant of the dangerous things concocting against them. No one has any presentiment of the threatening storm. They lie down, sleep, and awake in perfect peace, whilst the adversary steals about like a pestilence in the dark. Had

they seen the entire extent of the danger, they would have been terrified, and have exulted at the divine assistance. Is not the case the same with regard to the kingdom of God upon earth? And who can precisely say what powers of darkness may at this moment be in motion and preparation; and yet, whilst they are approaching, we slumber and sleep. Therefore be constantly on the watch, and pray; for their sole intention is to curse and destroy Israel.

Balaam consents to the arrangement, and withdraws a little, in order to wait and see whether the Lord will reveal any thing to him. How shamefully does he deny the truth, which he soon after utters, that God is not a son of man, that he should repent, since he does not cease attempting to induce him to act contrary to the promise once given. The Lord, notwithstanding, meets him, and puts words into his mouth, and says, "Go again unto Balak, and say thus." Therefore that which Balaam is about to utter is an indubitable revelation, literally inspired by God, in which Balaam participates no further than in the utterance of it, even as the strings of a harp, which emit sounds at the pleasure of the performer. He finds the king with a splendid retinue waiting for him, and Balak inquires with a curiosity which was ill-rewarded and entirely disappointed, "What hath the Lord spoken?" Let us also ask thus, but with better intentions; I mean, in order to believe and obey.

Balaam commences his parable. He begins with an emphatic preface, by which he excites expectation, and urges that attention which the sublime contents of his speech supremely deserve. "Rise up Balak, and hear," (better would it have been if both had taken it to

heart), hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor ;" that is, inconstant bird. But it is the Lord who gives both the hearing ear and the seeing eye, and who must also give the ear and the heart to listen to and receive the word, and really does give them to his people. Now follows the significant saying of the prophet itself, which has two objects. The first of which has reference to God, the second to his people.

Balaam speaks first of all of God, and commends in particular his faithfulness and immutability. He does so, first in a negative manner, when he puts all deception and fickleness far from him. "He is not a man that he should lie." The prophet bears an evil, but, alas ! well-founded testimony to mankind, which David and Paul confirm, when they say, "All men are liars ;" and this prophet was an arch liar, even when he told the truth, which became a lie with respect to him, and in his mouth, since his heart did not agree with it. Mankind are fickle. That which at one moment is yea with them, is often nay the next ; that which they desire at one time, they reject at another. Their favour changes itself, with reason or without, into displeasure ; and their love into repugnance and hatred. They retract their promises, or else do not fulfil them. They are not to be depended on ; and he that trusts in man, and even in himself, is not only a fool, but accursed also. They are weak, and unable to perform that which perhaps they gladly would, or are unwilling when they have the ability. In short, David justly exclaims, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." "They are altogether lighter than vanity." Balak has also considerable consciousness of this, and will rather strive

with supernatural than with human power against Israel.

The inspired prophet removes all this far away from God, whom he intentionally designates by the name EL, the strong; for he is mighty in counsel, and wonderful in working. Hence he adds an interrogation, and asks, "Hath he said it, and shall he not do, keep, and perform it?" No; that which he has promised he never retracts, and that which he engages to do, he omnipotently accomplishes, in defiance of every obstacle. He is the God, whose name is Amen; and at the same time, the EL SHADDAI, the all-sufficient God. Hence his covenant of grace is *sure*. "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but his grace shall not depart, nor the covenant of his peace be removed." "A woman may forget her suckling, so as to have no compassion on the son of her womb; yet he has promised, saying, I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands!" That which he has once blessed, continues eternally blessed. It is a sacred bond, which rests upon immutable foundations—the oath of God and his omnipotent blood. When any one is received into this covenant of grace, it keeps an eternal hold of him; otherwise, what would be the result, since we are of ourselves so weak that we cannot stand a moment. Without the immutability of the covenant of grace, it would be dangerous to be a Christian. Balaam himself is a striking proof of this. The whole desire of this poisonous serpent, this devil in the form of an angel of light, and his whole endeavour, was directed to injure Israel, and even entirely to extirpate and destroy him. But the Almighty would not permit this. Against his will he is obliged to confess,

“Behold, I have received commandment to bless: he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.” Well may the Apostle say, “All things *must* work together for good to them that love God,” even when they are unwilling to do so, and intend the contrary. Is it not extremely wonderful, that a rational man like Balaam should feel himself placed in the unavoidable necessity of uttering words which he does not wish to speak, but just the very reverse? Truly, O Israel, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.” If our eyes were opened, like those of Elisha’s servant, we should see that they that are for us are more than they that can be against us; and that he who is in us is greater than he that is in the world.

Balaam is constrained to speak highly of the exalted privileges of the people of God, although he has no part with them, nor desires to have any. But he commends them, because it is the will of God to use his mouth for that purpose, even as he had previously employed the mouth of the ass to instruct the prophet. He speaks first of the glorious state of Israel: secondly, of its security. “There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.” And, lastly, he speaks of its present and future blessedness. The glorious state in which the people of God are placed the prophet expresses in the remarkable words, “He hath not beheld toil in Jacob, nor labour in Israel.” These words may be also differently rendered. A learned and pious Englishman has translated them as follows, “He cannot and will not permit that toil and pain should be caused to Jacob, and misfortune and sorrow to Israel.” All the versions of the reformed Protestant church, with the exception of the Lutheran,

render these words in the following manner, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness or unrighteousness in Israel." For thus is the passage given in the Dutch, French, and English translations of the Scriptures, all of which may be relied upon, and are not only conformable to faith—that is, agree with the other doctrines of the gospel—but are also proofs of the depth of the words of God, which proceeded from such unworthy lips. All three, taken together, show us the meaning of these immediate divine words in their glorious plenitude and richness, since every translation lets us see some radiant side of this glittering diamond; the one this, the other that. (The difference of the translation is caused by the different signification of the two Hebrew words *Aven* and *Amal*.) We will consider the passage according to its threefold translation, and although the last of them furnishes the foundation of the whole, yet we will begin with that which Luther's valuable translation offers us. "No toil is seen in Jacob, nor any labour in Israel;" and thus consider the fruit before the tree, and the effect before the cause. In doing so, we will contemplate first, the persons; and secondly, the things which are spoken of negatively respecting them.

The persons are Jacob and Israel, two names of the same patriarch, to whom his parents gave the name of Jacob, but whom God called Israel; "for, said he, as a prince, thou hast had power with God, and hast prevailed." Observe the complete knowledge of this circumstance which Balaam the Syrian possesses. He mentions the name of Jacob first, and then Israel, even as the holy patriarch bore the former name before the latter. Not only did his immediate descendants bear

this name, but the whole people of God are also called his Israel. "For," says he, by the mouth of the prophet, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Isaiah xlv. 3—5.) Jacob implies more the church militant, and Israel the church triumphant. Wrestling Jacob, whose hip is dislocated in the conflict, becomes, when the sun rises upon him, victorious Israel. First the former, then the latter. First conflict, then victory.

Balaam speaks of toil and labour, and says that they are not seen in Jacob; for there is neither labour, nor sorrow, nor pain. But are we not ready to say, that these words are an obvious proof that Balaam was a false prophet, and wholly mistaken? Ought we not rather apparently, and even according to the word of God, to inquire, Where is there such trouble and toil to be found as in Israel? Is not this confirmed by the complaints of so many members of the church and their manifold experience? Hear a Jacob say, "All these things are against me;" a David, "My soul is sore vexed, I am weary with my groaning, mine eye is consumed because of grief." Hear him say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken; but I was greatly afflicted;" hear an Asaph complain, "All day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning;" a Heman, "My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth near

to the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit ; I am as a man that hath no strength ;" hear a Jeremiah inquiring, " Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow !" Read the mournings of Job. Behold Daniel in the den of lions ; Stephen stoned to death ; hear Paul describe his afflictions, and consider your own selves. Is not, therefore, the experience of every age more or less opposed to that which this false prophet says ? But even the Holy Scriptures themselves assert, that " whosoever will follow Jesus must take up his cross daily, and lose his own life ;" must " enter, through much tribulation, into the kingdom of God ;" that if we are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, we are bastards, and not sons, whom the Father of Spirits chastises to their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. And thus the Scriptures speak also of those who arrive in the realms above, and are arrayed in white raiment, with palms of victory in their hands, as having " come out of great tribulation." How can Balaam, therefore, come forward and say, no labour nor sorrow is seen in Jacob, since, on the contrary, Asaph says that " the wicked are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." How much labour and sorrow is experienced at the commencement, when the sinner's sins are revealed to him, and he becomes conscious what anguish it occasions to have forsaken God, on account of which he experiences a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and trembles at the word of God ! How much suffering is felt in the furnace of temptation, and how many a Jacob walks in darkness, and has no light ! If this mercenary prophet, therefore, saw no toil in Jacob, he

seems to have had no eyes, and to have been unacquainted with the hearts of these strangers, because he himself was not one of them.

But he goes on to say, "And no labour in Israel." This was really the case externally. They sowed not, neither did they reap, and yet their heavenly Father nourished them. They neither spun nor wove; for their clothes and their shoes never waxed old. They did nothing but gather the manna, prepare it according to their taste, change their place of encampment from time to time, take down the tents and set them up again, wash, dress, and undress themselves. With respect to spiritual Israel, certainly, as regards the greater part, they have escaped from all toil and labour, and are entered into complete and heavenly rest. Israel below, however, is, for the most part, full of labour. There is the work of repentance, the labour of conflict, the overcoming and extirpating that which is evil; yes, it is all toil and labour, and nothing else. For it is now that the injunctions to work, strive, wrestle, withstand, give all diligence, add to your faith, fight, and run, are fulfilled, so that we may well say,

"Painful and thorny is the road
That leads to happiness and God."

Nevertheless, it is the Spirit of truth which compels the lying prophet to say, "No toil is seen in Jacob; neither is there any labour in Israel." And this is true in more than one respect; for instance, the word toil is also called vanity. Jacob, however, has not to do with vain things, but with great and real blessings; with justification, sanctification, the Lord Jesus, eternal salvation, and the Holy Spirit; for he is of the truth,

and has received an understanding to be in him that is true. He does not let himself be fed with wind, but seeks light and justice. Labour may also mean misfortune. But no real misfortune approaches the tents of Jacob ; for " all things must work together for good to them that love God." Though Balak may give himself all conceivable pains to destroy Israel, and Balaam assist him with all his might, yet they shall not succeed.

There is a season when the guidance of the soul varies from the passages above quoted, and is more in accordance with others ; I mean, such as the following : " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price ! Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good ; and let your soul delight itself in fatness." " In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." " I saw his ways, and healed him, and restored comforts unto its mourners." " Return unto thy rest, O my soul ! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." " Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth for ever, which the Son of God shall give unto you." " He that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Christ has taken upon himself the labour of our sins, and taken away the toil of them. Hence it is the duty and the privilege of Israel to rest from all labour, and to enjoy the fruits of that which Christ has

wrought out, inasmuch as he has long ago honourably brought us off in the judgment. Of this privilege we avail ourselves, and this duty we bring into exercise, when we believe, and according to the measure of our faith. "For we who believe, do enter into rest." And he that is entered into his rest, hath also ceased from his own works, as God did from his. He has also given us the Sabbath as a sign, that it is the Lord who sanctifies us. By real faith, a man is translated out of himself into Christ, and, so to speak, loses himself in his fulness. His prayer becomes enjoyment. But how deficient is our faith, and hence how limited are its effects! Looking at the thing correctly, therefore, no toil is seen in Jacob, and no labour in Israel; in him whose thigh is out of joint whilst wrestling, and who has no other resource, than to hang upon the neck of his victorious antagonist.

Balaam, is, consequently, in the right. Where faith has been really quickened by the knowledge of all the blessings which we have in Christ Jesus, toil and labour, care and sorrow, depart; for it does wonders, and puts into practice the most delightful commands, such as, "Be careful for nothing." "Be without carefulness;" for, viewed in the light of faith, why should they care? and of what should they be afraid, whilst with such a Lord? Ought they to care on account of their debt of sin, which is liquidated, and of which the hand-writing was nailed to the cross, and taken out of the way? Or because of their infirmities, all which he heals, and which he covers with his innocence and holiness from the sight of God? Ought they to care on account of the want of a righteousness of their own, seeing that he himself is

their righteousness; or on account of their weakness, since his strength is perfected in it? Ought they to be horrified at the might, multitude, and malice of their enemies, with such a leader and forerunner? Are afflictions themselves any thing else than blessings? So that James counts him happy who endures temptation; for after he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life. Is not death only a complete dying to sin, and an entering into eternal life? Who dare even accuse them, much less condemn them? Christ is here, and that is enough.

Believe, therefore, and thus become a Jacob, in whom there is no toil, and an Israel, in whom there is no labour. Understand more and more clearly, that in Christ your head, you are richly provided with every thing. This will not suffer you to remain idle and unfruitful, but will furnish you richly with all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and God himself will work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Amen.

XV.

ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

NUMB. xxiii. 21—23.

“ He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

“ God brought them out of Egypt ; he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn.

“ Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. According to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought ?”

“ BE not deceived !” This is one of the most important injunctions, which the holy Apostle seeks to impress, not only upon the Galatian church, but also upon all. He refers to erroneous opinions in reference to religion, which are always attended with impropriety of conduct. This command, “ Be not deceived !” proves, also, the possibility of preserving ourselves from deception ; for a line of conduct, which is in itself absolutely impracticable, is never required of us, although the constitution of my nature may render it impracticable to me. Hence such great

things are enjoined upon us, and however impossible their fulfilment may be to us as sinners, as is really the case, even in the smallest particle, yet they are not so to the Christian, "for all things are possible to him that believeth."

The injunction above-mentioned, is important and difficult, but necessary and practicable. Important, for it concerns the eternal salvation of our souls; difficult, for we are always inclined to error; necessary, that we may not miss the right way to fellowship with God; practicable, by faith in Jesus Christ, but in no other manner, because it is by means of this faith that we receive the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth. But, in general, there are few who are concerned to attain to a thorough knowledge of the truth, whilst the greater part of Christians are very superficial, and therefore exposed to every kind of error. There are those, also, who do not love the truth, but hate it, because their deeds are evil. Hence it is no wonder, that in consequence of the subtlety of the prince of darkness, and the wickedness of men, error prevails in the world, and is still so predominant, even amongst the well disposed.

Christ is the truth. He that is of the truth heareth his voice. Out of him there is nothing but error; but he that belongs to him is safe, even as Balaam's words prove, which we will now investigate a little more closely.

We have recently observed, that Balaam's significant words admit of a threefold translation. We have considered that which is given us in our German version. Let us now reflect upon these words, which we ought to honour the more as the pure words of

God, the less inclined Balaam was to utter them, according to a second translation, which is, "He cannot, and will not permit, that evil and pain be caused to Jacob, nor misfortune and sorrow to Israel." Balak wished to inflict the latter; but God would not permit it. In this sense, also, the words of Balaam contain much that is consolatory and instructive. We connect them with the twenty-third verse, which is as follows: "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." The people of God are secure against misfortune and evil. This is the subject of our present consideration, in which we will attend to the following points:

1. The persons who enjoy this privilege.
2. The evil, or misfortune.
3. Who they are that seek to inflict it, and how far they succeed.
4. The conduct of God in the case.

Jacob and Israel are two names of the same person, and the same people, of which the first has reference chiefly to conflict, the latter to victory. These names, however, are not merely applicable to the descendants of the patriarch, according to the flesh, but point out, in particular, the elect, who tread in the footsteps of his faith. In this sense, the name Jacob may have reference more to the Old Testament, and a state of grace, in accordance with it; but Israel, to the New Testament. The advantage of the latter people consists in the Lord being with, and in them, as their God. We do not become members of this people by carnal descent, for a man may be born of the flesh, and yet hate that which is born of the Spirit, as was the case with Ishmael, the son of Abraham, and Esau, the son

of Isaac. All those belong to this people, who are born again of God by the Spirit, who by faith are incorporated into Christ, and are thus one with him, who by means of this faith are justified, purified, renewed, and kept, and by it overcome the world, and who, when they believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. If thou art such a one, thou belongest to this people, in whatever country thou mayest be born, whether in Europe or the islands of the Pacific. If thou canst not lay claim to this regeneration, Abraham himself might have been thy father, or thou one of the most learned and celebrated, most illustrious, dignified, and virtuous of men; yet nothing avails but a new creature, and a faith which works by love.

Such is the character of the people of God. There exists certainly a considerable difference amongst them, not merely as regards their exterior, but also with respect to their inward state. There are amongst them children, young men, and fathers, carnal and perfect, novices and those that are further advanced; there are those that are weary and heavy laden, and also those who are refreshed, and have found rest unto their souls. Some stand in the faith, and are vigorous and strong. They do not stagger at the promise, but are fully persuaded that he is faithful who has promised, and that what he has promised he is also able to perform; and hope, where nothing is to be hoped for. But there are also those in Jacob, of whom it must be said, "O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?" where is your faith?—those who sing the 103d Psalm, and those who groan the 88th. There are those who are shut up under the law, which acts towards them like a severe schoolmaster, excites and quickens sin in them, slays

them, and in the character of the letter that killeth, deprives them of strength and life. The burden of their song is, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But there are also those who, dead to the law, belong to another husband, and who, like Boaz, will not rest "until he has finished the thing;" they who through the law are dead to the law, and live; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them. There are those whom David places in the heat of the battle, who resist even unto blood, whilst striving against sin; and, like Jacob, dislocate their thigh in the struggle; those who are compelled to endure the buffetings of Satan, and at whom the wicked one aims his fiery darts; those who suffer defeats, so that their enemy rejoices against them at their overthrow. Others go forward in the strength of their Lord, and make their boast of being in Christ. In him they come off more than conquerors; for they are strong in the Lord. In short, the variety of shades discernible amongst the children of God, is great, notwithstanding their existing union; and in this great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honour, and some to dishonour; and when we contemplate the guests, who surround the table of the King of heaven, we find them consisting of the poor and the maimed, the blind and the lame.

These are the individuals of whom God speaks through the unworthy mouth of Balaam, and whom he designates by the names of Jacob and Israel. It is with reference to them that he speaks of toil and sorrow, labour and misfortune, and at the same time of enchantment and divination against Israel. That

can only be properly termed misfortune, which occasions real injury, and deprives us of some real good. But of this God says, "It shall not come nigh their dwelling;" although Asaph says, that notwithstanding his godliness, he was afflicted, whilst the ungodly are not in trouble as other men are. But soon after he confesses his error, and exclaims, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by my right hand. Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "All things must work together for good to them that love God;" how, therefore, can any misfortune befall them? for nothing deserves that name, which tends to promote our salvation, however unpleasant it may be in other respects; for if a man were to lose the world and yet win his soul, his gain would be very great.

In the twenty-third verse, particular mention is made of enchantment and divination against Israel; and we are reminded by it chiefly of false doctrine and that false worship of God which results from it, for these belong to the things which are the most pernicious, although they may not like to be regarded as such, and though no one, besides those who belong to Israel, seeks to guard against them. Much might be said on the subject of false doctrine, especially since it has spread so universally in the present day. For to this every thing belongs which is not derived from Scripture, nor in accordance with it. Jesus quotes the words of the prophet Isaiah, (xxix. 13,) when he says, in Matt. xv. 9, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Hence we ought, with the Bereans, to search the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things are so.

The Apostle Peter calls the father of Balaam, Bosor, which signifies a torch, even as Beor, his Hebrew name, denotes an incendiary; but Balak means a destroyer. During the last sixty years, we have heard much of enlightened reason, and have been told that every thing must be illumined by its torch; by which means great devastation has been made in the doctrine of the protestant church in particular. I will not trouble you with a description of the progress of the matter, but will only notice a few things.

Every thing was previously ecclesiastically orthodox. Great care was taken, that neither from the pulpits nor in the universities or schools any erroneous doctrines should be promulgated; and those who ventured to do so, were severely punished. Each confession was compelled to teach according to its own articles of faith; the Lutheran, according to the Augsburg confession; and the Reformed in this part of the country, according to the Heidelberg catechism; for which purpose, the preachers were obliged to give their hands, which had the virtue of an oath, and repeat this ceremony annually at the synods; but this is now no longer required, which is sufficiently lamentable.

But now people began, very gently indeed, to act the part of Balak the destroyer. They first rendered a stiff and morbid orthodoxy contemptible by observing—which was very just, but in some respects with an evil intention—that a lifeless assent to the doctrines of faith, without godliness, saved no one. The evil intention connected with this assertion consisted in the desire to depreciate the doctrine of faith, and render it contemptible. In this they the more easily succeeded, since pious and learned men, who had been called

Pietists and Methodists, had formerly said similar things with a good intention, though not with sufficient prudence. They then went a step further, and spoke against the strict obligation to adhere to the articles of faith, which were, after all, only of human formation, and not the word of God. Nor did this seem to be so very improper, although the sole intention was to secure themselves against the punishment which had been hitherto attached to deviations from the established doctrines. At the same time various English works, which attacked the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures, were numerous translated into German, and a French witling inflicted deep wounds upon superstition and truth, in consequence of possessing in Germany, when banished from France, the esteem of a great monarch, who also afforded his protection to foreigners of similar sentiments. The torch of error was thus completely hurled into the temple, which began to burn on all sides.

They now proceeded with still greater audacity and hardihood, to treat single truths as errors; and in order not perceptibly to excite too great attention and murmuring, they began to deny the existence of the devil, as being contrary to reason; consequently to declare an express doctrine of Scripture to be erroneous; after which they intended to proceed in the same manner with all the other peculiar doctrines of the word of God, and carried their purpose into effect. They now exclaimed, "Reason! reason! march of intellect! enlightened reason!" Every thing was then received in the light of this torch, and set on fire by it, so that the whole catechism, nay, even the whole Bible, had it not been fire-proof, would have been consumed

to ashes, even as is really the case with respect to many churches, congregations, districts, and countries.

Such is the situation of things in the present day. The expression, "Enlightened reason," is, indeed, less frequently used; but, in its stead, synonymous terms are employed. It is now called Rationalism; that is, the doctrine of reason, according to which man is not a sinner, Jesus no Saviour, and there is no such thing as sin, no punishment, and no redemption; and this is just as corrupt nature wishes it; it can, therefore, never fail of being applauded, and is so richly. Abominable philosophy, of a highly serious nature, continues to manifest itself, which, in the end, denies the difference between good and evil, and gives Balaam's advice, to commit fornication; of which we have an example in the sect of the St. Simonians, in France, who have taught it so openly, that even the frivolous Frenchmen have refused to tolerate it. We have said enough of this sect, when we tell you that it has publicly declared that it honours Satan, and seeks a god in the world and for the world, but rejects the christian religion, which instructs mankind to seek their happiness in another world. So bold has Satan become!

Thus also the worship of God is counterfeited. I have not immediate reference here to the Romish church, for we have beams enough in our own eyes, without feeling at liberty to draw your attention to others. By some, Christ is rejected. For the sake of some miserable virtue, they seek to be reckoned fit for heaven, but not for Christ's sake. The wisdom of man sits regent, and however stupid a man may be in other respects, yet he esteems himself so wise in the doctrine of salvation, that he has no need of a teacher. Pride

expels humility. Free will must take the place of free grace; and the latter is in such disrepute, that it dare no longer be mentioned without every thing being roused against it. Or else the two are so jumbled together, that a poor sinner who longs for salvation, cannot ascertain whether he is to be saved by the merit of works or by grace; besides which, there is no third expedient. Still they are so intermingled, as if a third, nevertheless, existed. Hence the poor sinner is at a loss to know whether he can do any thing without Christ, or what he is really able or unable to accomplish; whether he ought to rest his hopes half, entirely, or not at all upon grace; who it is, or whether it is he himself, who enables him to will and to do; whether he must seek to be perfect with respect to the flesh, and is thus immersed in his own doings, until the Lord “turns his hand upon the little ones.”

Satan, also, ever since the times of the Apostles, has laboured to seduce men to draw down the gospel into the flesh, and turn grace into licentiousness; thus perverting its doctrines and the liberty which it brings with it, and making them a covering for wickedness and a license for antinomianism; and producing characters, with reference to whom it would have been better had they not known the way of righteousness, than that, after having known it, they should turn from the holy commandment which is given them. He has exalted many in their own imaginations to such a degree, that they separate themselves, with haughty scorn, from church and sacrament, and the word of God, and behave as proudly as if they were the people, and as if wisdom and godliness would die with them! And O how painful it is to be obliged to confess, that even

amongst us, there are lamentable traces of the errors just alluded to! all which are signs of the horrible times which the Apostles have predicted, and which are now realized—times in which even the elect, if that were possible, should be seduced into error, and in which no one could be saved, unless they were shortened. Such periods are worse than contagious diseases, wars, and rumours of wars. “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked.” Beware of false prophets, who, notwithstanding their specious appearance, are inwardly ravening wolves. Beware of Satan, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

This false doctrine, which is justly denominated enchantment, because Satan supports it by his secret power, is an evil, which is greatly to be dreaded; since its intention is to rob us of God, of Jesus Christ and his grace, as well as of our only consolation, and to plunge us into everlasting destruction. In this manner Satan seeks to overthrow the bulwarks of the church, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. I will make no mention at present of any other tribulations to which it is exposed in this world. But true Christians have often been counted as sheep for the slaughter, and given over unto death.

But who is it that seeks to trouble Israel with sorcery and enchantments, with sufferings and misfortunes? In the narrative before us it was Balak and Balaam; in the first period of the church it was Saul. It is frequently a single individual, who places himself at the head of the adversaries; and at other times, whole colleges and fraternities, with Satan for their leader. Within, it is the old man, and it even some-

times seems as if God himself sided with the enemies of Israel. See 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1, where it is said, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel," and "Satan provoked David to number Israel." It was not enough that Esau marched against Jacob; the angel of the Lord also wrestled with him.

Success seems occasionally to attend the adversaries of Israel in a very obvious manner; even as Balak, in consequence of the counsel of Balaam, succeeded in his machinations against them to such an extent, that, in one day, twenty-two thousand of them were slain. Such is also the case with false doctrine. It may be said to prevail and rule. By the power of the Romish see, the purified faith was expelled from Portugal, Spain, and Italy, with the exception of the vallies of Piedmont, even as the christian religion itself was banished from the East by the Mahometans, and the consequences of the Reformation are now, in a great measure, expelled from Germany and other Protestant countries, so that only little of it is left. The increase of ungodliness is notorious. And in individual instances, the soul may be placed in such circumstances, as to exclaim with David, "My hope in the Lord is perished."

But does Balaam prove himself to be a false prophet, when he says that God will not and cannot permit that pain and sorrow should be inflicted upon Jacob, or toil and trouble upon Israel? that "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel?" Or is it out of the Lord's power to help? Neither the one nor the other. What Balaam says is true, although he himself is a liar; even as the devils continued to be devils, although they confessed the

truth, when they said to Jesus, "Thou art the Son of God." It is he who permits the evil, alleviates and overrules it, and finally frustrates it entirely.

We say he permits evil ; in such a manner, that he suffers a particular evil to occur, and no other. The cause of it we are sometimes, but not always, enabled to perceive. It is evident to us, for instance, why Jesus was compelled to flee into Egypt ; why he was visited with thirst ; why he was crucified ; why lots were cast upon his garment, and why he died as a malefactor. We see the reason why Paul was permitted to persecute the church, because by this means it was scattered, and the gospel preached in other places besides Jerusalem. But we do not understand why the Apostle James was so prematurely beheaded. On the contrary, we can conceive what reason there was for the heavy afflictions with which Job was visited. We know why a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet Paul, although we are ignorant of the precise nature of this buffeting, and why it was necessary that a messenger of Satan should be employed for the purpose. If thou canst not comprehend, my christian friend, why some severe affliction befalls thee, be patient, put thy mouth in the dust, wait in hope, and believe that God loves thee.

He alleviates and sets bounds to the evils which fall upon his people. For "if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, they had swallowed us up alive." If the Lord had not foreseen and provided against it, the christian religion would no longer exist in the world, nor godliness in a single heart. Even the elect would be deceived. But

he sets bounds to their trials, and says to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further." The Jews might, indeed, disperse the church at Jerusalem, but could not annihilate it. Pharaoh purposed the destruction of the Jewish people, by ordering all the male infants to be slain : he did not, however, succeed, for even the Egyptian midwives undertook their preservation. All those erroneous doctrines which we have previously noticed, notwithstanding the multitude of their promoters, cannot prevent the doctrine of salvation from reviving and spreading in various places in the present day.

The Lord not only alleviates the evil, but also occasionally increases it. The little daughter of Jairus was sick unto death when her father went out to implore the aid of Jesus ; but on his return she was dead. Lazarus not only dies, although Jesus had sent word to his sisters that his sickness was not unto death, but is even buried, and lies in the ground four days. A storm assails the vessel in which are the disciples ; the sea rages, and the waves beat into the ship ; Jesus is there, but he is asleep, and the disciples have no faith. Job loses in one day, first his men, then his sheep, afterwards his camels, and finally, all his seven children, upon whom the house fell. He himself is still in health, but becomes leprous in his body, and much distressed in his soul. England loses its excellent king, in the eighteenth year of his age ; and his successor is his blood-thirsty arch-catholic sister, who fills the land with scaffolds and the blood of Protestants.

But he so overrules these evils, that they terminate in blessings. His people are preserved in a wonderful manner, and stand like a rock in the midst of the

raging ocean. The more violent the persecution, the purer the religion, and the more it increases. It is purified from the dross which attaches to it, and deprived of every support but God. It is exercised in self-renunciation, in confidence in God, resignation to him, in prayer, and in cleaving to God. It is corrected in a variety of ways. "This my trials have taught me," Luther was wont to say. But who can state all the advantages which Christians derive from their afflictions. "Though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." He overrules the evil, so that it takes place precisely in the manner in which it does occur. It does not come to us by chance, but from his paternal hand, not without an object and intention. And at length, he will redeem us from all evil, and bring us to his heavenly kingdom. He that hath delivered us, delivers us daily, and will deliver. Christ is made of God unto his believing people, redemption, as well as wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Though the kings of Bashan may set themselves in array against Israel, and Balak and Balaam oppose him with sorcery and divination, yet Israel enters into his rest. God cannot and will not permit that toil should be caused Jacob, and misfortune inflicted upon Israel. Though he fall, yet shall he rise again; though he sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto him. A real misfortune, which is only attended with injurious consequences, never befalls the true children of God, even as in reality nothing but misfortune happens to the ungodly, until, as it respects them, the hour, the fortunate hour, of

repentance arrives. Every thing proves injurious to them. There is nothing but misery and destruction in all their ways, though they may seem to sit in the lap of prosperity. Real success commences with a sincere repentance, and with a living faith in the Lord Jesus. The sinner then drinks of the living water which Jesus gives to those who, knowing the gift of God, beseech him for it, and in whom it becomes a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

In the case of the sinner, therefore, there is nothing but misfortune in life, death, and eternity; but as regards the godly, happiness, prosperity, and blessing attend them, even into the world to come. We are still upon the way. Choose, therefore; choose the good part, which shall never be taken from you. The Lord now places life and death, the blessing and the curse, before thee; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days, that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord will give thee. "For no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of God, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Amen.

XVI.

ISRAEL'S BEAUTY.

NUMB. xxiv. 5, 6.

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

“As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters.”

WE have recently considered the tents of Jacob and the tabernacles of Israel, and Israel itself as a habitation. Balaam calls them goodly, and enlarges upon this idea in a metaphorical manner. Let these form the subject of our further consideration.

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” exclaims the prophet, and commends both on account of their goodness.

Tents are certainly something burdensome; at least the Apostle says, “In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.” They are only a make-shift, and serve as a slight defence against the inclemency of the weather. They are narrow, and

cannot contain much. Tabernacles are figures of the life of a Christian in the desert of this world. We will not speak of the difficulties attendant upon it, because every individual experiences them in his measure. This dwelling in tents is, nevertheless, profitable, although not agreeable ; profitable, because these tabernacles are not intended for long use, much less for a permanent abode. They are soon broken down, and the spirit is then received into the eternal palaces of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the true home of the Christian. Hence they seek the things that are above, not what is on the earth, and live in the constant recollection, that here they have no continuing city. Dwelling in tents is profitable, because it serves as a necessary preparation for our eternal home. Here the people of God are regenerated and variously exercised. Here is the school in which many things are learnt, which will prove beneficial to them hereafter, and constitute an important part of the song of praise which will then be sung, when every one will bring his own harp, and sing his particular hymn of praise. The present is a state of probation, for the purpose of various and remarkable experience with respect to ourselves and to Christ, of having our faith tested in a variety of ways, and of being rendered so little in our own esteem, as to enable us to pass through the narrow gate of salvation.

However untenable tents may be, and however little defence they may afford, yet we are safe whilst residing in them. We have the treasure, indeed, in earthly vessels, yet they are preserved from such severe blows as would break them, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Although weak, we

are, nevertheless, strong, and although insufficient of ourselves, yet we can do all things. Though the tents be small, and unable to contain much, yet the living tents, of which we are speaking, are so comprehensive, as to be called temples of God, temples of the Holy Ghost, and for Christ, the hope of glory, to live, dwell, and walk in them, although they may be frequently little or not at all conscious of it. They are under most minute superintendence and guidance; for they are not like the horse and the mule, which must be held in with the bit and bridle. The pillar of cloud and of fire precedes them, though unseen, and the breaker is gone up before them. Their encampments are minutely ordered, and not a hair falls from their heads without the will of their Father in heaven; nay, every thing must work together for their good. The sheep of Jesus hear his voice, and follow him.

These tents will, sooner or later, be broken down; but this is the best that can be said of them. It is the same as when the bud expands into a flower, and the flower becomes fruit; as when a vessel sails into port, after a stormy voyage; and as when a soldier returns to his peaceful home, after a victorious campaign. Even great things await this vile body, seeing that it has the promise of being made like unto Christ's glorious body. Be patient, therefore, dear brethren, even as the husbandman patiently waiteth for the harvest.

The poverty of your tents does not permit you to place your confidence in them, and exercises you in a constant dependance upon the Captain of your salvation. Learn thoroughly how great is your insufficiency without him, but hope so much the more in his

mercy, which will not suffer you to want any good thing. Hence Balaam justly calls the tents of Jacob goodly, notwithstanding the trouble attending them.

The same is true, in a still greater degree, with reference to the tabernacles or habitations of Israel. If the tents have reference to the desert of this life; the tabernacles point more to Canaan, to Jerusalem, and to heaven. The tents may also represent the Old Testament economy, which is done away, as something obsolete, even as the tabernacles may prefigure the New Testament dispensation, which is perfect and permanent. We will not, however, follow out this idea any further.

“How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel!” This is true, in a most extensive sense, inasmuch as the eternal Son of the Father has prepared himself an everlasting habitation from the flesh and blood of Israel, by a personal union with it, in order to present it, as a sacrifice on the cross, to atone for our sin, as well as to impart his own flesh and blood to us to be the meat and drink of our souls, that thus they may have everlasting life by faith, and he unite himself with us, as our righteousness and life, to prevent us from falling a prey to eternal death; and in order to represent, advocate, and intercede for us in the heavenly sanctuary. This is the basis of the whole of our religion.

“How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel!” This is very true, seeing that thou art a habitation of God. And hence, because his Spirit dwells in thee, thou must be lovely. The blessing of the Lord descend upon thee, thou habitation of righteousness, thou holy mountain! Sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb,

the destroying angel passes reverentially by thee, and the Spirit, even of God and of glory, rests upon thee.

“How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel of God,” in the covenant of grace, when dead to the law by the body of Christ, thou art joined to this other husband, who was raised from the dead that we might live unto God, since, being freed from the law, and dead to that which held them in bondage, thou now servest in the newness of the Spirit. O precious covenant of grace! He that knows thee, takes pleasure in thee; for thy commandments are not grievous. By its means, our dwelling in tents, our journeyings and labours are changed into a peaceful reclining upon the downy pillows of the promises at the amply stored table of divine grace. “Thou preparest a table before me,” says David, “in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

“How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel,” whose real and peculiar mansions are above. It is there that Israel has its conversation and its citizenship; from whence, also, we look for our Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord, who shall fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body. But, in the mean time, there is often enough to suffer. In the Canticles, the bridegroom invites the bride “to come from the lions’ dens, and from the mountains of the leopards,” where the abode must certainly be an anxious one. But the more stormy the voyage, the more agreeable the safe tranquillity of the harbour; the hotter the conflict,

the more joyful the victory. We still walk by faith, not by sight.

If, therefore, we are astonished at Balaam's glorious expressions, and at God for making use of him for such a purpose, we ought to be not the less astonished that this man, with the knowledge he possessed, had no desire for any of the glorious things he uttered. One would think he would not rest until he became incorporated with the people he had so much commended. But the contrary is the case: he speaks thus, because he is compelled to do so: he speaks thus in an unregenerate condition—nay, he even hates and persecutes the people whom he thus extols. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord?” Who can fathom the human heart? How depraved is man, so long as he is not born again of the Spirit of God!

The prophet enlarges upon what he had just been saying of Israel, in metaphorical language. “As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters.” Beautiful imagery, but not exaggerated; splendid, but true. Let us trace its meaning a little more minutely.

He first compares Israel's state with brooks and valleys; for the word he uses signifies both. A brook is a suitable image for the children of God. Brooks are a collection of water; and Christians have drunk of that living water, which has become in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. They believe on the Son of God, according to the Scriptures, and therefore streams of living water flow from them. The water of spiritual gifts is poured out upon them;

for he says, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Brooks derive their origin from eternal springs, or proceed from the rain which comes down from heaven. Christians do not make themselves so, but are created in Christ Jesus. God hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. They are born from above, of water and the Spirit, and have their origin in God, with whom is the fountain of life. Brooks are of great use, and not only beautify, but fructify a country. Christians are, first of all, of the greatest benefit to themselves; for "godliness is profitable for all things," and is "great gain." Without it there is nothing but loss and ruin. As soon as a person becomes a Christian, he becomes, at the same time, a happy man. "Blessed art thou, that thou hast believed!" He also becomes beautiful; for "Jesus' blood and righteousness his beauty are, his glorious dress." The Christian, then, also becomes useful to others. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom, the whole city and its vicinity would have been spared. Were all godliness, conscientiousness, and uprightness to cease in a land, who could, or who would wish to dwell there? Godliness certainly exalts a nation, but iniquity is the people's destruction. What is the appearance presented by a family devoid of the fear of God? Is not the want of it a fruitful source of poverty as well as of every vice? not to mention eternal perdition.

Even the windings through which brooks meander, teach us especially two things. This winding course is an image of our naturally crooked and perverted hearts, and of the serpentine cunning and subtlety,

which is of such a nature, that God himself says of it, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it! I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins." With reference to the children of God, the windings of a brook remind us of the vicissitudes in their guidance; being led, first in one way, and then in another. Here a mountain opposes their passage; there they cast themselves down from a rock, and are lost in foam and dust. Still they approach ever nearer their aim, the sea; by uniting themselves with a larger stream, which carries them along with it into the mighty ocean, where they entirely lose their peculiarity, and assume that of the sea, in which they lose themselves. God brings to nought that which is. We are nothing but froth and foam. Did we not continually receive new supplies from the inexhaustible fountain in heaven, we should dry up like a brook. The great river is Christ; the ocean, a blissful eternity.

Thus Balaam represents Israel under the instructive figure of a brook. The word also denotes a valley; an image of lowliness and humility, which is a useful and necessary quality. He giveth grace to the humble. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. This humbling of ourselves is nothing assumed or self-made; nothing pretended, but entirely natural. This is something put upon Israel. He is brought to such a state, that he cannot think otherwise than meanly of himself. God faithfully abases him. He does so by a thorough discovery of the depths of human corruption, by a kind forgiveness of it, and by covering it with the righteousness of Christ, by the communication of gifts and graces, and by the withholding and withdrawing of

that which we thought we firmly possessed. If he intends to have mercy upon his servants, when he sees that their strength is gone, he brings them into this valley. All boasting is then renounced, not as a duty, but because there is nothing left whereof to boast. We are then unable to make any more promises, because we have no ability to perform, or to preserve that which is good. We are then, indeed, able to pray, hope, and believe; but only on the condition of its being given us to do so. However, as every mountain and hill shall be brought low, so every valley shall be exalted. If we are such valleys, the dew and the water will flow down to us from the mountains. He that judgeth himself shall not be judged, but acquitted. He that calls himself a sinner before God, shall be saved; and he who professes himself wicked shall be made righteous. To the weak he gives strength, and to the simple wisdom; and to him who is nothing in his own esteem, Christ becomes all. In short, he dwells with those who are of a humble and a contrite heart, that he may revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones.

Balaam represents Israel, the chosen church of Jesus Christ, in a second metaphor, as "gardens by the river's side." Another instructive image, respecting which we remark by the way, that the word "gardens," in the Hebrew, includes in it the idea of defence. Gardens do not make themselves, and if we are Christians, if we are true believers, are we not God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works? Gardens naturally yield weeds; and what else do our hearts produce, the imaginations

of which are evil, and that continually? These the gardens which are left to themselves are so little able and willing to root up, that, on the contrary, they prove themselves their true parents; and if an Ethiopian can change his skin, or a leopard his spots, then may they also walk uprightly. "If I be wicked," says Job, "why then labour I in vain?" "But I will cleanse you," saith the Lord, "and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Who ever heard of gardens planting and sowing themselves? They must have a gardener for that purpose. "Every plant," says Jesus, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Ye are the plants to the glory of the Lord. "I have ordained you, that ye should bring forth fruit." How much care do gardens require during the greater part of the year. The Lord's eye is upon his people day and night.

A garden does not always present the same appearance; its aspect is different, according to the season. In the winter it is petrified with cold, and hard as a stone; a picture of the state of trial and abandonment. It rests beneath a covering of white snow; a figure of the repose of a soul under the protection of the righteousness of faith. The primary labour in the spring, whilst seeming to destroy it, only prepares it for fruitfulness. Such is also the case with the garden of Christ, in the hearts of those whom he makes into good trees. A complete overturning takes place, and the soul complains, and says, "Ah, who am I, my Redeemer, I find my state deteriorate daily?" But it is not long before every thing shoots forth in lovely verdure. The trees are covered with the fairest bloom,

and the birds sing in their branches; a representation of a soul, after Jesus has favoured the individual with the forgiveness of his sins, and the assurance of his salvation; so that the soul acquires courage to say, "I am black, but comely." Plentiful summer comes as an image of the various gifts with which the bride invites her beloved to come into his garden, and eat of his spices; when there is no want of light in the understanding, peace in the conscience, faith in the heart, love in faith, nor of the fruits of love. Autumn returns to the lap of mother earth all that which adorned the garden. Leaves and fruit drop gratefully down. The soul divests itself of all its own glory, and its language is, "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but to thy name give glory!" "Not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us." "Our sufficiency is of God."

We have still to observe, that, in a spiritual sense, gardens yield their fruit in due time. Those awakened souls, who are immediately desirous of possessing all knowledge, all faith, and all holiness, must learn to run with patience, nor suppose that they are already men and fathers, whilst they are, perhaps, still carnal, and babes in Christ, which they manifest by their self-complacency and presumption. But as new-born babes, be desirous of the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

Finally, gardens are surrounded by a separating and protecting fence. "A garden enclosed, is my sister, my spouse." (Sol. Song iv. 12.) What would become of the poor garden, if it were not so well protected; if the Lord himself were not the wall round about it?

How would all that pass by, ravage it, and the wild beasts of the field devour it! But Israel now enjoys a complete defence, however dangerous its situation may occasionally, and even always appear. For the garden is menaced, even from within. There are birds; evil spirits, as the great Master explains them to mean, which strive to catch away the good seed; hail, drought, and humidity threaten to destroy the plants; weeds incessantly spring up along with them; beetles, caterpillars, and vermin fall upon them, and a variety of injurious worms gnaw the roots beneath the ground. Now, if our gardens require divine protection, although we are able to do much at them, how much more our hearts! "I will be to Ephraim like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found." "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." (Isaiah lxi. 11.)

Balaam not only compares Israel to gardens in general, but also to such as are situated on the water-brooks. Such a location, in the hot and dry countries of the east, where it seldom rains, is incomparably more valuable than in this country. Hence Israel is frequently compared to such a garden. Thus it is said, in Isaiah, (lviii. 11), "And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." And in Jeremiah xxxi. 12, "They shall come and sing in the heights of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall

not sorrow any more." These water-brooks, on which the gardens are situate, are the means of promoting their fruitfulness; and this is accomplished by those salutary chastisements, beneath the strokes of which the old man decays, but the new man is daily renewed, as well as by the pruning-hook of the heavenly Vine-dresser, by which the fruitful vine is purged, that it may bring forth more fruit. But these water-brooks more especially signify the vivifying influences of the Holy Spirit, without which we remain barren, unfruitful, and dead; and particularly his consolations, by which we are cheered and encouraged to run in the way of his commandments.

Balaam is evidently like one who beholds through a perspective glass objects as near at hand, which otherwise, on account of their distance, are not visible to the naked eye. He describes the church, not according to the form in which it appeared at that time, and under the Old Testament dispensation, but that which it assumed under the New Testament constitution, and in which it will manifest itself in the last ages.

Take heed that your likeness is also pourtrayed in these metaphors; that you at least are vallies, poor in spirit; and if not brooks, yet athirst after righteousness; and if not well-watered gardens, yet such as are under the care and attention of the heavenly gardener.

XVII.

THE UNAVAILING ATTEMPT TO CURSE ISRAEL.

NUMB. xxiii. 25 ; xxiv. 9.

“ And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

“ He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion ; who shall stir him up ? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

BALAK'S displeasure at the blessing pronounced by Balaam—the attempt, for the third time repeated, to curse Israel—and the entirely opposite result, are the subjects of our present consideration.

Balak listens with mute attention to the prophet ; and hears him bless in the most glorious manner, instead of uttering the worst of curses. It is astonishing that he suffers Balaam to make an end of his speech. At length he cries aloud, interrupts the prophet, who probably might otherwise have said more, and commands him to be silent, saying, “ Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.” Balak is much too infuriated even to mention the name of the people. He merely says “ them,” or else “ my enemies,” although they

wanted nothing of his, and it would have been excusable in him, had he been desirous of becoming better acquainted with the hated people.

Balaam excuses himself, and says, "Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?" I cannot avoid it. The king makes a new proposition. He still supposes that the fault lies only in the place. He therefore changes it a third time, saying, "Peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence." The king is really so far affected as to begin to believe that God has his hand in the work; at least, he mentions his name, which he had not previously done. It is now from the top of Mount Peor that the curse is to be hurled upon Israel. God is again attempted to be bribed by fourteen sacrifices on seven altars. Self-righteous man does good only for the sake of his own benefit, and not from love; and hence all he does is of no value.

Let us now contemplate the result.

The prophet had now sufficiently ascertained the divine determination to bless Israel, although this conviction did not influence him to give up all attempts to effect the contrary. Thus many are convinced that they cannot be saved in their present state, and that a change must take place in them, and yet no change occurs. This is greatly to be deplored. Those servants who knew their master's will, and yet did not prepare themselves, shall be beaten with many stripes. This conviction, however, had so much weight with Balaam, that he did not go as before to the sorcerers. In Hebrew the word means enchanter and serpents. The Jews say that the two servants whom Balaam took with him were the two sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres

who withstood Moses in Egypt, imitated almost all the wonders, and thus entirely hardened Pharaoh. Balaam had previously taken counsel with these men; but this time he did not do so. On the contrary, after the sacrifices were offered, he turned his face towards the wilderness, where Israel was encamped. Many, otherwise wicked men, may also feel so powerfully convinced, so shaken and affected by the terrors of the law, the extent of its requirements, the dread of its threatenings, the horrors of hell, and the joys of heaven, as to take the resolution to avoid that which is evil and do good; so that for a longer or a shorter time they really act differently; and yet all is nothing but mere will worship, and has no duration. God himself said of Ahab, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" Of Herod it is said, "He did many things for John's sake," whom he nevertheless beheaded in the end. Hosea says of the Jews, "They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow." Simon Magus believed. In many instances there is much of what is external, many trimmed lamps, but no oil; words, but no power; high-sounding language, but empty and unmeaning; much appearance, but little reality. Be watchful, therefore, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, not by halves, but wholly, unto Christ himself. Thus, in Balaam's case, there was a little, but not enough. His whole mind ought to have been changed and renewed. But this was not the case, and hence the last was worse than the first.

When Balaam looked down upon the wilderness, the splendid view of the Israelitish encampment presented itself to him. The sight must indeed have been truly

imposing; even as we have already had occasion to explain.

Whilst the prophet was viewing this encampment, the Spirit of God came upon him; which does not merely mean, that he fell into a trance, and was, so to speak, beside himself, but much more. The Spirit of God really came upon him; not, however, to regenerate, sanctify, and enlighten him, to produce true faith in him, to endue him with a right understanding, and to shed abroad the love of God in him. The Spirit of God is also the source of every natural gift, which he distributes in a variety of degrees; he is the origin of the natural understanding in its various stages, of the memory, &c. He bestows also many particular gifts, such as singular prudence and discernment, eloquence, and valour, inventive, architectural, mechanical, and other abilities and talents. In our admiration of those that possess them, we ought not, therefore, to overlook the Spirit of God as the donor, nor to idolize the individuals as if they emanated from themselves. A person may, however, be distinguished above others by wonderful gifts, and yet be wicked and reprobate. Tertullus was an orator, but at the same time an enemy of Christ. The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, as he afterwards did upon king Saul, who, in consequence of it, lay the whole day upon the earth, and prophesied; so that it was said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" And in this way Caiaphas, the wicked high priest, uttered those words, by which he decided that Jesus should die for the people, not of himself, but by inspiration, in virtue of his office, because God had determined that Jesus should die for the people, that the whole nation might not perish. Balaam, by this

means, was translated into a supernatural state. He was only the unwilling and unworthy instrument which God employed. He did not understand himself what he said, nor did he desire to do so ; it caused him no pleasure, but the contrary. His words were excellent and divine, but his heart was wicked, and even devilish.

He now began to vent his speech like the bursting forth of new wine. The Hebrew word here is *Maschal*, which is also the term used for Solomon's proverbs, as well as the parables of Jesus, according to Matt. xiii. 3, and Psalm lxxviii. 2. The expression implies dark sayings which are important, but the understanding of which requires attention and consideration. Of this nature is the saying of Balaam, which now follows. In considering it, we will attend first to the introduction, and then to the saying itself. The prophet begins in a humble manner, but soon manifests his pride. "Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said;" the secret interpretation of which is, "The instigator of the people, the son of the enlightening torch." Truly, a dangerous character! His intrigues are manifest, even in our days. And what do you suppose will be the result? Time will show.

The inspired Syrian reveals himself further, and represents himself as a person of high importance, although he is a mere nothing. "The man hath said," who may be justly called a man, distinguished far above others, endowed with rare gifts, light, and powers. A third time he repeats his "hath said," and adds, "which heard the words of God." If this be true, it is something great. But instead of humbling, he only exalts himself in consequence of it, and regards

himself as something particular. How very differently did David act; according to 1 Chron. xviii. 16, &c. God had also spoken to him, and the Spirit of the Lord had spoken by him. But he says, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God! What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant, for thou knowest thy servant?" The more humility, the more grace; the more highly we think of ourselves, the further we are from grace. David was an instance of the former, Balaam of the latter.

He adds, "Which saw the vision of the Almighty." He calls himself a seer, even as Samuel is also called. It is remarkable, that he calls God Shaddai, the term which God applied to himself when speaking with the patriarch Abraham, he said, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect; for I am El Shaddai." Whence came it that Balaam called God by this name? which distinguishes him as the All-sufficient, both with reference to himself and to all his creatures. Hence it was said to Paul, in his affliction, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It also characterizes him as the self-existent God, by whom all things exist, are upheld, and maintained in being. Shaddai signifies in Hebrew, "the mother's breast;" and thus it is promised in Isaiah lxvi. 11, "Ye shall suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of the consolations of Jerusalem, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." The light which Balaam possessed was glorious,

but it was unproductive. He did not suck these breasts; but preferred gold and silver, and thus his knowledge of that which is good caused him to incur double responsibility, because he did not do the Lord's will.

Finally, he boasts of being one "whose eyes are opened, falling into a trance." These words are in some degree obscure. The eyes here meant, are not the eyes of the body, these windows of the soul, these admirable and mysterious instruments, by which it beholds visible objects in a totally inexplicable manner; but that which is here intended is a prophetic faculty of perception with which we are unacquainted, and which looks into distant futurity, as in the case of Balaam. He boasts of this faculty, which, notwithstanding, availed him not, since it did not sanctify him. He says it manifests itself more particularly in him when he falls into a trance, and ascribes great efficacy to the latter, as all the self-righteous do; and as if it were something particular and meritorious, by which he accomplished much. The whole preface has no other object than that of exalting himself. But that which is highly esteemed amongst men is an abomination before God.

Let us now consider the saying itself, which is certainly very important. In doing so, we shall reflect upon the place of Israel's residence, their fate, their extension, their king, his acts, and his security. "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee! How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as

cedar-trees beside the waters !" These are glorious, but by no means exaggerated descriptions ; nay, they even fall short of the reality. Israel certainly occupies a beautiful situation. Balaam evidently looks beyond what lay before him ; for the desert could not be thus unconditionally termed a goodly residence. Nor was it their real dwelling-place, which was Canaan, beyond Jordan. Nor was even this their abiding home, but a still more loftily situated Jerusalem, which is above, and the mother of us all.

He speaks of the tents and tabernacles of Israel. At that time they really dwelt in tents, which were made of linen, or bushes, or else of curtains. God himself dwelt in such a tabernacle, and when John says, " The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," he uses a word which might be rendered, " tabernacled among us." Israel still dwells in tents spiritually. For Christ has not limited his New Testament kingdom, like the Old, to one particular country or city. He has no where fixed it so as that it may be said of it, " lo here ! or, lo there !" It is wherever his word and his Spirit are, and proceeds onwards like the sun. It has entirely departed from many regions, where it formerly flourished, as, for instance, from the East ; and Mahomet rules there, where previously Christ was preached. From the East it proceeded westward to the countries which we inhabit, even to the furthest north, and is now directing its course to countries in which hitherto the name of Christ has never been heard. Even within the limits of the christian church, the sun of the gospel rises in one place and sets in another ; shines brighter over one district, and more obscurely over another. In one

place frequent awakenings to newness of life occur, whilst in another, they rarely happen, if at all, or else very soon disappear. Wherever the King turns, the spikenard yields its perfume.

The prophet praises Israel on account of his dwellings, which at the same time imply something that is firm and established. The Hebrew term perfectly corresponds with our word settlement, a place where the individual remains, and fixes his residence. This leads us to remark, first, that Israel itself is an abode, and that too of the triune God. Christ himself says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) "His Spirit dwelleth in you." "What, know ye not that Jesus Christ is within you?" "Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God." "Cry out, and shout, therefore, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!" Who would venture to think thus of Israel, did not the word of God speak in such a manner? A tabernacle, outwardly mean, weak, and easily overthrown, yet inwardly the residence of the Most High and the King of kings. However, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Israel, secondly, has also a habitation, a settlement, where it may safely repose, and which is founded upon a rock that never moves, and which establishes that which is built upon it. This firm basis is the election of God; for he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

“ I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Further ; though we by no means find the cause of Israel's firm abode in Israel itself, yet so much the more so in the suretyship which One, who was sufficient for it, undertook, even during the Old Testament dispensation, and which he fully accomplished at its close ; he that was before Abraham, the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, the Redeemer on whom Job trusted with firm confidence, and who washes his people from their sins in his own blood. The basis of Israel's dwelling-place is not the covenant of works, but the covenant of grace, acknowledged even by David as such, which, though containing hidden wisdom, is nevertheless well ordered in all things and sure. In this region of peace the quickening breath of the Holy Spirit prevails, and when God sends it forth, the face of the earth and the heart is renewed. He that understands it aright, does not find here the smallest legal condition, for this would spoil all, even as it did in paradise, from which we are still suffering ; nor does he meet with any requirement directed abstractedly to us, and expected to be fulfilled by us alone. On these green pastures, and by these still waters, as they are termed in Psalm xxiii., the whole atmosphere is eternal compassion and free grace. Here the heavens rain down righteousness and the forgiveness of sins, grace, and truth. Here beams the mild and tempered light of heavenly illumination,

and one mystery of the gospel after another expands itself like flowers of the most fragrant perfume. Here the honey of the Holy Spirit's sweet consolation drops from the comb, and the precious wine from the wine-press of Gethsemane refreshes the soul, and intoxicates it with the rich blessings of his house. Here we are anointed and beautified as with fresh oil; we make straight paths for our feet, and stumble no more like the lame, but hope to the end for the grace that shall be revealed, and which so richly bestows upon us all that is requisite for life and for godliness. When he abides in us, and we in him, we bring forth much fruit to the glory of God the Father. Yes, "Israel shall dwell in safety and alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Yes, my friends, Balaam is in the right in saying, "How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel!" There are some amongst mankind, and even in this assembly, who are the habitations of God through the Spirit, according to the sublime expression of the Apostle. But there are also those who are the children of the devil and the seed of the serpent, who constitute the majority, in whom the devil carries on his work, who are by nature children of unbelief and wrath, and a habitation of every unclean spirit. You do not regard

yourselves as such. But woe unto you if you continue thus, and do not turn unto him who came to destroy the works of the devil, and who alone can make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Delay no longer. You have long enough stood idle in the market-place. Look, the shades of evening fall around you, and the night is approaching in which no man can work. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.”

But this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. Amen.

XVIII.

THE ALOE.

NUMB. xxiv. 6.

“ As the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted.”

BALAAM compares the church of God to the brooks or vallies between the mountains, and to gardens by the river's side. But not content with these figures, he selects two more from the vegetable kingdom, and these the most excellent with which he is acquainted, the aloe and the cedar. At present we will confine our observations to the former.

The aloe must serve him as a figure to represent the people of God, an aloe which the Lord hath planted. Thus, in Psalm xlv. 8, it is said, “ All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” Of this plant there are a variety of kinds, several of which are small, but pretty. But Balaam doubtless meant the great aloe.* Being not minutely acquainted with its

* Called by some commentators, the Indian Calambac, the most resinous and fragrant of all woods.

history, I will only mention some of its qualities, as containing points of resemblance with those of the real children of God. It is not a native of our country, but requires a warm temperature, an eastern soil and climate. "All men have not faith." "They are not of this world," says Christ, "even as I am not of this world." They are the children of a kingdom which is not of this world. They are not born of the blood or will of man, but of God, from above. The world knoweth them not. The natural soil of our hearts is unsuitable, is too cold, hard, and stony for the celestial plants of faith, love, and hope to be indigenous and flourish there. Hence we must be born again, and obtain a new heart and a right spirit. Old things must pass away; all things become new. The world, indeed, perceives that true Christians are, so to speak, exotic productions, and gazes at them, but knows not what account to make of them, and whether they are not enthusiasts and fanatics, fools and hypocrites, and even beside themselves; she knows not what to say of them, is afraid of them, shuns them, suspects them of much that is evil, scoffs and mocks at them, rejects and hates them. They appear to her as things out of fashion; she does not understand their language, which seems to her absurd; and when they are converted, they even wonder at themselves. Yes, even those in whom this heavenly plant is found, are conscious that it is not of native growth, but finds a variety of opposition, and requires a different soil and a different climate.

But although the aloe may be a foreign and oriental production, yet still it is found in the plantations of the rich, on account of its rarity. But then it requires

a minute attention, and an exact knowledge of the method of treating it. It then sometimes flourishes to a considerable degree, by mixing artificial soils, and forcing a warmth which corresponds with its native temperature.

Heaven is the real native land of godliness; there it meets with no obstruction. There the flesh, with its desires and lusts, its wisdom and its folly, does not strive against the Spirit, but all is spirit; no world is there to vex and allure, no stumbling-block, no error, no trial, nor any more temptation, and no enemy to sow tares. There is no strife, because there is none to oppose; no tears, because there is no more sorrow; patience is no longer necessary there; nor even hope and faith; for all is possession, enjoyment, and sight, for ever and ever. Heaven is the native land of godliness, for there every thing is combined in the most perfect manner, which favours and promotes it. There the Spirit flows, not by drops, but like a stream; not occasionally, but continually. There the treasure is no longer in earthen vessels, but perfect; since that which is in part, is done away. We there see no longer as through a glass darkly, but face to face, and know even as we are known. There we are surrounded on all sides by the most glorious and lovely company, no self-interest exists there, no distinction of rank, age, or sex, and nothing but encouragement and consolation. There we find, also, united, what can engage the senses, which we shall re-attain with our bodies at the resurrection, in the most pleasing and sacred manner. What lovely harmony will there be heard, when the hundred and forty-four thousand strike their divine harps, and the heavenly hosts commence the song of

Moses and the Lamb! How delightful will it be to join with them in their celestial strains, and to rejoice, give thanks, and praise! What will it be, with glorified eyes to behold him, in whom we have here believed, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! What a liberty will that be, to be able to do whatever we will, because we desire nothing but what God will; receive every thing that we desire, be it what it may, because we desire nothing but in God, through God, and to God! In short, there is the native soil in which the aloe of godliness flourishes in perfection. Yet he, whom Mary Magdalen, not without reason, mistook for the gardener, has also his plants here on earth, in this unfavourable and inhospitable climate, which he hath planted, that they may bring forth fruit, and that their fruit may remain. They come from above; for all that is good is treasured up in Christ, and therefore can only enter into us from him, seeing that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing.

But these heavenly plants abundantly show that this is not their native soil, and it is easy to perceive it in them, so that it is almost strange how they can, I will not say, flourish in any respect, but continue without being entirely destroyed. There is a bitter enemy of this aloe, named Satau, the adversary, who endeavours to mar every little spot where such a tree might be planted, or to destroy it, when it is just beginning to take root, and choke it in its birth. For this purpose, he exerts every thing that power, wickedness, and subtlety can effect, and ceases not, though he may change his mode of attack, and strives to attain his object by the appearance of sanctity, when he fails of

it by the allurements to sin. Poor little plant, what will become of thee! Even the soil in which thou standest—the heart, is so far from being favourable, that it is hostile to thee, since it favours plants of a very different kind, which are intended to destroy thee. Spirit and flesh are opposed to each other as much as water and fire. Art thou fire, the water will extinguish thee; if water, the fire will dry thee up. O poor plant! the good that thou wouldst thou doest not, but the evil that thou wouldst not, that thou doest; not indeed thou, but the soil in which thou art planted, and which is the parent of the tares. No wonder that thou sometimes moanest and exclaimest, with another bruised reed, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” since only with thy mind thou servest the law of God, but with thy flesh, the law of sin.

If an aloe is to flourish in this country, great expense, art, and knowledge, as well as unceasing care and attention, are requisite. A building must be erected for it; the artificial warmth must have its degrees and temperature, be sufficient, and yet not too great; it must neither be too moist nor too dry, and the gardener must know when it requires the one and the other. It must be in no want of light or air, and a variety of things must be attended to by the gardener in this climate. If he neglects any thing, the tree corrupts and dies.

He must indeed be rich, who wishes to rear an aloe such as Balaam speaks of, in this foreign land, which the Lord hath cursed, and which only produces thorns and thistles. It is his will, and therefore it must be accomplished. His will is your sanctification; this is

your happiness. It is as little your will, as that aloes are the production of this country. "Not of the will of man, but of God." What is his will must be fulfilled. Jesus the Lord, who desires to have such plants, is rich enough to bear the expense, and willing to apply it; for he possessed heaven, and gave it up; he was highly exalted, and yet humbled himself; he had a body, and offered it up; he shed his blood for the remission of sins. He possesses the kingdom of heaven, and presents it to the poor, who can give him nothing in return. He has the Holy Spirit, and pours him out on whom he pleases, sends him whither he will, and in the measure he thinks fit, and works by him according as it seemeth him good. He is wisdom, power, the resurrection, and the life; he makes the simple wise, the weak strong, the dead alive.

This rich Lord does not intrust the care of his plants to another, but attends to them himself, with as much wisdom as love. In reality, he is himself every thing to his plants; the soil in which they take root, the suitable edifice in which they stand, the warmth which animates them, the water which refreshes them, the light which shines upon them, the air which breathes around them, and the hand which most appropriately regulates all things concerning them. He that does not understand it, might well suppose, that many things were improper, which in reality are the most suitable, and prove that they are so by their effects. At one time the heat seems too great and of too long continuance, and as if it would burn up every thing; and then, that there is too much water, as if the plant

would be drowned. But the wise hand of the heavenly gardener, most wisely regulates every thing, and thou wilt still thank him afterwards, on reflecting how he was at all times the help of thy countenance and thy God. Trust him, and leave him to act; for all things must work together for good to them that love God.

There are a variety of species of the aloe; some of them small and pretty, adorned as with pearls, and of all sizes, to the very largest, which is also small at first. Is not this also a representation of the church of Christ, both in heaven, where there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars; and here below, where religion manifests itself in so many gradations and varieties? Different degrees of knowledge are evident amongst Christians, which vary even in their own lives. How altered the disciples were after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from what they had been before! From being children, they became young men, even as Paul, speaking of himself, says, "When I was a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." He blames the believing Corinthians for being still carnal and babes in Christ, to whom milk, and not strong meat, must be given; and the Hebrews, that when they ought to have been teachers, they required to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God, and admonishes these children in wisdom to become men of understanding, and the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to increase in the knowledge of God, and to be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. There may be also those who, like

Apollos, are mighty in the Scriptures, and instructed in the way of the Lord, and yet find means to become more minutely acquainted with the way of God.

How many gradations are there, likewise, in faith, from the blade to the ear, from the glimmering taper to the burning torch, from the pliant willow to the sturdy oak ! Faith where we see, faith where nothing is seen, and faith where the very opposite exists ; when God causes his face to shine, and when he hides it and is angry. Faith that God is true, when Isaac is really playing upon his aged mother's lap, and faith to believe, when, as a youth of eighteen years of age, he lies upon the altar, and his father's hand is stretched out to slay him. Still the little aloes belong to the number, and are of the same genus ; and there was, perhaps, never more joy in the house than at the moment when the piece of silver was found, though, probably, covered with dust ; and the sheep, though perfectly weary, weak, and hungry, and half dead ; and when the prodigal son again made his appearance, though ragged and barefoot. The smallest infants are often the most beloved, and when the chickens are great, the hen drives them away, which previously took such care of them as to forget herself. A child is a human being as well as a man. In the present instance, however, the prophet refers to the largest species of aloe, which is also small at the beginning.

The mode of propagating it is likewise an instructive representation of the church. The natural aloe is obtained from the young shoots which the parent plant sends forth from beneath. Such is also the case with godliness. The principle of its existence lies in the plant of righteousness which God has raised up, even

Christ, without whom its possessor has nothing, is nothing, and can do nothing; on which account he is justly called a Christian. However, the shoots of the natural aloe are separated from the parent plant, and planted in their own soil, in order to be standard plants. But such is not the case in spiritual things. "Abide in me," says Christ; and again, "If ye abide in me," &c. In reference to this, our Lord employs the figure of the branches of the vine, which only bear fruit when they abide in the vine. There is no soil in which we can prosper but Christ. "Be rooted in him; and walk in him."

Aloes are strong and juicy plants. Their strength enables them to bear a heavy weight, although they may not be able to stand every kind of weather. Christians are admonished to be strong; not, however, in themselves, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, which is perfected in weakness. They cannot bear every wind of doctrine, and if it be of a nature to carry them away from the Lord, they stand comfortless and weep; for Christ's sheep know not the voice of a stranger, nor follow it. If erroneous doctrine prevail, they are like plants without rain. But they are also strong, and when a season of drought comes, they are not afraid; for they are as trees planted by the water-brooks. The plants of which we speak, must be able to bear many a gust of wind, and in the end come off victorious, for their gardener attends to them faithfully, and out of every temptation makes a way for their escape.

The aloe is an armed plant. Its strong leaves end in sharp and prickly points, which, like couched lances, surround the stem of the plant, and injure

those who seek to injure it. Do not you find also in this idea a representation of true Christians? They certainly constitute a peaceful people, that are intent, not upon wounding, but healing, and, like their King, not upon destroying, but saving. But though "fair as the moon," they are also "terrible as an army with banners." Oppressed for upwards of six thousand years, they are like the palm-tree, which shoots upward the more, the greater the weight which is attached to its top. Although surrounded invisibly with numberless enemies and dangers, yet they are able to say at the end, "Thanks be to God, who always giveth us the victory!" If we have the treasure in earthen vessels, yet the exceeding greatness of the power is of God. Though we may be oppressed, yet we are not destroyed. Yea, the aloe is so warlike, that in its native soil, fields and gardens are defended by it, and the ravages of wild beasts as well as men prevented. If Sodom had possessed ten such aloes, it might have stood to this hour.

If the aloe is in itself a beautiful plant, at the time of its flowering it appears in supreme splendour. It blooms only once, and then dies away. In this country it is seldom the case, and then only with much care and attention, that they can be brought to flower, and a century passes away first, so that no one who plants an aloe can expect to see it in flower. Whenever the latter occurs, the fame of it spreads far and wide, and people travel from a distance to see it. But it is such a rare thing, that it is well worth the trouble. A strong spike of flowers, which may be easily climbed up, rises out of the stem to a height of upwards of thirty feet. The purple-coloured flowers shoot forth

on elegant stalks, in the shape of a chandelier, in divisions around the principal stalk, like one crown above another. These flowers sometimes amount to eight or ten thousand in number. What a beautiful sight must they present! At the same time a sweet juice proceeds from them. But when the plant has thus attained to its highest perfection, it dies away, and returns to its former nothingness. This splendid appearance is an image of the Lord Christ, to which the godly attain in the world to come. That which was imperfect here, rises there to perfection; what was here but the germ, developes itself and becomes a luxuriant tree; and what was only inward, manifests itself also outwardly; not, however, like the aloe, to be annihilated; but to flourish in this splendour to the glory of God, and to the praise of the precious ransom paid for it, the blood of Jesus Christ, for the joy and rejoicing of all the children of God, for ever and ever. "And they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I procure unto them, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxiii. 9.)

"Which the Lord hath planted," adds Balaam. Those must, therefore, be plants indeed, which have God for their gardener, since he loves and tends them. He will also give the juices of his Spirit to feed the plants of his own hand. Even in the days of Job, the righteous and the pious were ridiculed, and appeared contemptible in the eyes of the proud, to whom they were an offence. (Job xii. 4.) And frequently they do not know themselves in their beauty; they have, however, the noblest origin and the most brilliant aim. Jesus Christ is the soil, in which by faith they are planted and rooted, and from whom they imbibe wis-

dom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the sun, which shines upon them, and the Holy Spirit, the dew and the rain that fructifies them.

Beware, therefore, of mocking the godly. You mock, by so doing, the plants of God, and this he will not suffer. Although they may appear contemptible to you, yet wait only a little while, and you shall see them shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, so that you will be dazzled by their glory, and be unable to bear the sight of it. Take heed, that eternal shame and disgrace do not cover you. Beware, lest Jesus, to whom you now refuse to come, do not then reject you and cast you from him, as accursed, into everlasting fire, and say, "Bring those men hither, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before my face." This is the day of grace, the day of salvation. If you neglect it, there remaineth nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Or have you reason to believe that you are of the Lord's planting? Do not deceive yourselves, but see to it, that your house be not built upon the sand, but upon the rock, Christ.

Happy are you, whom the Lord hath planted! he will tend and cherish you. Unto you that fear his name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under his wings. You shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads. Amen.

XIX.

THE CEDAR.

NUMB. xxiv. 6.

“As cedar-trees beside the waters.”

THIS is the fourth similitude under which Balaam represents Israel. We consider the cedar as an image of Christ and his church ; first, in general ; and, secondly, in a few particulars.

In considering the cedar as a figure of Christ and his church, we remark, primarily and generally, the earthly origin of Christ, according to his human nature. In this respect, like his church upon earth, he is a production of the earth. “For as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise, took part of the same,” “for both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one.” Jesus was a real man, like ourselves, but without sin, and without a human father, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. He was possessed of human affections, such as joy, sorrow, disturbance and peace, fear and hope, hatred, anger, love, terror and tranquillity, wishes and desires ; and these varied in him,

but were altogether perfectly holy. He had also the weaknesses of human nature, in so far as they were not sinful. He stood in need of food and sleep, was weary, hungry, and thirsty; and although we do not read that he ever laughed, yet he wept, and the children whom he embraced and blessed, he doubtless regarded in the most friendly manner, even as we also regard them. Pain, contempt, and disgrace, made as painful an impression upon him, as upon other men; and reproach broke his heart. He acted towards God as became a holy man. He was extremely humble, as he says of himself. On no occasion did he do his own will, even when menaced with things of a painful nature, as was particularly the case, when the bitter cup of anguish was presented to him in Gethsemane. How gladly would he have been exempted from it! but he prayed, and said, "Not my will, but thine be done!" It would have been extremely agreeable to his human nature to have escaped the baptism which straitened him so much, until it was accomplished, that he said, "Father, save me from this hour!" Yet still he was obedient unto the death of the cross. He considered himself as so dependent upon God, that he declared he could do nothing of himself, but that his Father gave him the works which he performed. He believed, prayed, returned thanks, and called himself a worm. As a proof of his earthly origin, we have two genealogies of him, the one of which traces back his descent to Adam, and the other to Abraham. Down to Noah, the progenitors of Jesus are all of them persons shining in the radiance of holiness, stars of the first magnitude, one of whom was even taken up alive into heaven. But from Noah, downwards, this radiance

becomes obscured, since his lineage does not seem to have continued free from idolatry, as is intimated in Joshua xxiv. 2, until Abraham appeared in unexceeded glory. After Jacob, a variety of persons occur in the line of descent, who were guilty of heinous and abominable sins, to the destruction of all boasting of human worthiness, and to the praise of the alone saving grace of God, since his Son was not ashamed of being descended from a Judah, a Thamar, a Rahab, a David, a Bathsheba, and a Manasseh, whose sins he wiped away and atoned for. For he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, though made sin for us.

The origin of the church of Christ is two-fold ; the one from Adam, the other from Christ ; the one from the earth, the other from heaven, and appears, according to the point of view from whence we regard it, according to the one origin or the other, disgusting or glorious. If we consider the church of Christ according to its origin from Adam, it is impossible to see any thing more abominable, except the devils themselves ; and if seven devils were cast out of a single Mary Magdalen, her state was evidently more horrible than that of a single devil. I will not now expatiate upon this subject, but refer the reader to Ezekiel xvi. 3—6, and to Romans iii. 10—18 ; after which it is impossible to regard human nature, subsequent to the fall, any otherwise than with the greatest abhorrence, or else we make God a liar, and prove that the truth is not in us. But old things are passed away ; behold ! all things are become new. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, since he has reconciled us in the body of his flesh through death,

to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight. Christ is the second origin of true Christians ; or rather, as Christians, their sole origin ; for by his resurrection they are begotten again, and translated into a state in which they can ask, " Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that justifieth." Now if we consider the church from this point of view, it is supremely glorious, without spot, and perfect in him.

The cedar is, secondly, an image of Christ in his exaltation and glory. The cedar is a very majestic tree, and, as it were, the king of the forests. No tree exceeds it in height and size, in circumference, durability, and the extent of its branches. It is always verdant, resinous, fragrant, incorruptible, and serves for the purposes of building. In the Scriptures, it is a figure of the High and Lofty One, of kings and lords, and especially of Christ in his exaltation, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Now if Christ is a pleasing object in his humiliation, and whilst atoning for our sins, it is still more delightful to contemplate him in his dignity and glory, as the proof of his finished work of grace, sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for us, possessing all power in heaven and earth, pouring out his Holy Spirit with his manifold gifts upon all his people, and preserving them from all the assaults of their enemies !

The lofty cedar presents to us, also, an emblem of true believers. If Christ is the tree, they are the branches ; is he the root of Jesse, they are the stem. Believers, in this life, certainly bear the image of Christ chiefly in his humiliation. As he was, so are they in the world. They always bear about with them the

dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Christ may be manifested in them. They have many a gloomy day, and seldom a joyful hour. And in other respects, their earthly position is much more frequently mean than splendid. The Scriptures compare true Christians, not only to the cedar, but to grass, the lily of the valley, a bruised reed, &c. ; not only to the lion, but also to the worm ; not only to the eagle, but also to a chicken, a turtle-dove, and even to a solitary sparrow on the house-top. But notwithstanding this, they are, even here below, glorious and exalted, either in faith, or in actual possession. The very circumstance of being able to believe is a glorious enjoyment of the blessings of Christ, to whose girdle faith belongs. How glorious it is to have their sins forgiven them, the domination of sin within them broken by the power of Christ, so that it can no longer reign over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace ; that though the tempter may assault them, yet he cannot ensnare and overpower them ; and that nothing really can injure them, but must prove beneficial to them ! How glorious is the enjoyment of those consolations, which are not unfrequently imparted to them ; the light afforded them, and the sealing of which they are the subjects ; enjoyments, which are of more value than the whole world, and which are obtainable by all. But that which constitutes the dignity and glory of those who belong to Christ, and makes them as cedars, is faith, which embraces Christ entirely, like a ring the precious stone. Faith does wonders, and removes mountains ; translates miserable sinners into the unfathomable sea of Christ's righteousness ; brings them out of the

distresses of the present life, into the peace of eternity, into Christ, and with him into heavenly places, whilst they are still absent from the Lord. In the faith which embraces all the divine promises, the believer possesses more than he knows, conceives, and comprehends, and stands like a noble cedar. But the best comes when faith is turned to sight; for then the poor and afflicted people whom the Lord has left to himself, will shine as the sun. For when Christ their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory. The church shall be like a lofty cedar, even before the last day, when the weakest shall be as David, and the brightness of the sun shall be seven-fold, and when all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest. But the church of Jesus Christ will display itself in its perfect glory, after the resurrection, when it shall be without spot or wrinkle, perfectly holy and glorious, like unto him, and shall see him as he is. Then we, who have borne the image of the earthly, shall also bear the image of the heavenly. This glory, which awaits all the godly, and for which they wait, exceeds all human conception.

In considering the cedar as an image of Christ and his church, we now contemplate, secondly, some of its peculiar properties.

The wood of the cedar was used, first of all, in the building of the temple, and in part of the divine worship. Solomon caused the whole interior of the temple to be lined with cedar, so that not a stone was seen, and then overlaid it with gold. What a rich and splendid appearance must it have presented, espe-

cially since all the vessels of the temple were of pure gold ! This temple is a figure of heaven, and in particular of the body of Christ, which he himself calls " this temple." In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily, and out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. He that cleaves to this head, receives supplies, so that he grows up to the divine stature. All that is in Christ is extremely desirable, is more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold. His riches are unsearchable, and they that partake of them are rich indeed. This interior of the temple, thus lined with cedar, and overlaid with gold, is a figure of the divinity of Christ, which, during his sojourn upon earth, was veiled by his flesh ; but he whose eyes were opened, beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But his people are also called temples for his sake, and through him. " Know ye not," says the Apostle, " that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you, whom ye have of God, and are not of your own ?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) God himself dwells and walks in them. They are all glorious within, as it respects their new nature, and holy things take place within them, through the operation of the Holy Spirit ; for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.

The wood of the cedar was also used in the temple-worship in two instances ; when the red cow was burnt, on which cedar-wood, together with hyssop and purple wool were thrown ; and also at the sprinkling with the

holy water of consecration, which was done with a bunch of hyssop, tied by a purple thread to a handle of cedar-wood. In this the highest united with the lowest; the cedar with the hyssop; the former an image of the divine, the latter of the human nature of Christ, united in his incarnation, both, in their several ways, active and passive for our redemption. This effects our purification, for the purpose of union with God; he having bought us with his own blood, that we might be his property. These extremes are likewise united in true Christians. They are partakers of the divine nature by regeneration, having escaped from the corruptions which are in the world through lust; they are also partakers of human nature in its fallen state. They are likewise, in some measure, instruments for the purification of others, by their conversation, admonitions, and reproofs, and by their godly deportment, by which others are gained over without words, as well as by their intercessions for others. But, generally speaking, if Christ is the temple, we must be in him, as the casing of cedar in the earthly temple, overlaid with the precious gold of his mediatorial righteousness. If we are in Christ, there is nothing damnable in us, seeing that we are found in him, not having on our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Cedar-wood is of an unctuous nature. Christ is so called because he is anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure. He received the Spirit in order to pour him out in the degree that he pleases; and according to the measure of his impartation, the individual is either a glimmering taper, a shining light, a

burning torch, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, or terrible as an army with banners. No one can receive any thing except it be given him from heaven. According as the wind blows favourably, the ship hastens along with full sails over the surface of the sea. Thus there is a weak faith, and a plenitude of faith, which glides along under full sail. He who really corresponds with his name, is anointed, and that with nothing less than the Spirit of Jesus Christ in his measure. He has the unction from the Holy One, and is made meet for every good work, since God works in him of his good pleasure by Jesus Christ. Even as cedar-boards partake of the nature of the cedar-tree, so Christians have the mind of Christ. By the natural birth we are made sinners; regeneration makes us Christians, and by faith we become members of Christ, and partakers of his anointing, branches of the true vine. Let no one who is destitute of these, arrogate to himself the christian name.

Cedar-wood emits a pleasing smell. "Thy name," says the bride, in Cant. i. 3, "is as ointment poured forth, because of the savour of thy good ointment;" and she compares him, in verse 13, with a bundle of fragrant myrrh upon her breast, which refreshes her by its perfume. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, chap. v. 2, says, "Walk in love, even as Christ has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." And certainly there is nothing more odoriferous for a lost and contrite sinner than when the name of Christ is poured out as ointment before him by the Holy Spirit—an ointment which, at the same time, heals every

wound. If this name has not become precious, supremely precious to you, it is only a proof that you have not even attained to the first degree of the divine life, that of knowing the greatness of your sin and misery. Become conscious of this, and this ointment will assuredly become precious to you, for there is salvation in no other.

XX.

ISRAEL'S GREATNESS.

NUMB. xxiv. 6, 7.

“As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.”

It is a precious promise which God gives to spiritual Israel, in Hosea xiv. 5, 6, when, in the greatness of his condescension and grace, he says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” A lily shares the same fate with many other flowers. In the autumn it dies away completely, and disappears, as if it had never been. This is a picture of our state by nature, according to which we have entirely lost all the beauty and glory with which we were adorned in Paradise. The lily, in the winter, is an emblem of self-knowledge, in which the man appears to himself to be like it, and really is so, without any beauty. It is, in particular, a

figure of the state of a Christian in trial, when every thing is taken from him as it respects feeling, use, and enjoyment, and he learns to know himself as one who possesses nothing inwardly. He then greatly resembles a lily in the winter. Nothing is probably seen; the bulb, however, is concealed in the bosom of the earth, and gathers new strength. But the Lord promises, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily." The winter of our natural state and of trial then passes away, the green leaves of hope spring up, and the beautiful lily of faith and righteousness appears in its snow-white splendour, more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory, and shedding the sweetest perfume.

"His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him. I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

In our previous meditation we considered the cedar as a figure of Christ and his church. A few points of comparison still remain, which we will briefly notice before proceeding further. The last point we mentioned was the perfume emitted by the cedar. The name of Christ is as ointment poured forth. But what can be more beautiful than the names by which his

church is adorned? Some of these appellations are expressions of the most affectionate tenderness, such as the bride of the Lamb, dear children, friends, &c.; others point out their dignity, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." They are called "Just," and can there be a more honourable title? They are also described as heroes, who come off more than conquerors, who can do all things, and are even invincible. They are called the children of God. Now, if the children of earthly potentates enjoy great privileges and honours, what will be the lot of those in the heavenly world, who fill the high station of children of God? Every thing is comprised in the name of Christian. A Christian is a king, to whom all things must be subservient; a priest who has access to God at all times, and a wise man, who has the unction from the Holy One, and knoweth all things. But it does not yet appear what we shall be. A diamond in the earth, and unpolished, is still a diamond, and destined to glitter in gold; when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. If there is any thing that is infinitely worth the pains, it is to become a Christian. They are God's peculiar workmanship.

Let me, secondly, remark, respecting the cedar, that it is not liable to be worm-eaten, like other wood. The worm of sin did not penetrate into the heart of Jesus. Though tempted in all points like as we are, he continued free from sin; and every temptation he experienced, only proved that there was not the smallest fibre in his whole being that responded to sin, otherwise it would have manifested itself. He that is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in

him, and he cannot sin. A Christian has no secret understanding with sin, for then he would be a hypocrite, and that is impossible. He is all glorious in the deepest recesses of his soul, however agitated the surface may be. It always shows itself again, and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit. The regenerate soul also occasionally becomes conscious of what is given her of God, however deeply it may sometimes be covered with rubbish.

I remark, thirdly, that the cedar was reckoned very valuable. If it were wished to express that any thing was valuable, it was customary to say it was worthy to be preserved in cedar. What a precious treasure is Christ! He is so in himself, as being the supreme good, the way, the truth, and the life, the one thing needful. All salvation and blessedness is to be found in him, so that he who possesses him, possesses all things in him. Who is able to declare the extent of his worthiness, since every thing in him is extremely desirable? If wisdom be better than gold and silver, he is wisdom itself, and its source. If Paul does not estimate righteousness too highly, when he regards every thing in comparison with it as dung and dross, he is the righteousness that avails before God. How great the value of his flesh, which affords true food for the soul; his blood, which washes out the stains of sin, and his cross, on which our curse, our old man, the handwriting of our sins, and death itself was crucified and put out of the way! Look at his body in the grave, and be convinced by the sight, that your punishment lay upon him; behold it empty, and perceive how he took away your sin. Think of his resurrection, by which he brought life and immortality to light; think

how he has ascended up into heaven, and there sits, as one who has offered an all-sufficient sacrifice, and expect him to appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. What is cedar, or all the precious things on earth, compared with this inestimable treasure? Dirt and filth.

To them, therefore, that believe, he is precious, although to the unbelieving he may be a stone of stumbling, as Peter says. He is become precious to them in consequence of their wretchedness, from whence they knew of no deliverer but him; precious by the peace and comfort which he imparted to them, superior to all that the creature can afford; precious by all the glorious blessings which he bestows; precious by the Holy Spirit, who unfolds the riches of Christ to them; precious by their continual dependance upon him, since without him they can do nothing, nor exist a moment, are nothing, know nothing, and have nothing, except through him and in him. For his sake they are also precious in the sight of God, angels, and godly men. How should they not, as believers, be esteemed so, since in Christ they are members of Christ. Hence he beholds no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. How should they not be precious in the sight of God, seeing that he spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all! “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.” (Isaiah xliii. 4.) O, whoever rightly knew and believed the love which God has to such wretches as we, would exclaim with John, he is love itself! And his Son loved us to such a degree as not only to wash us from our sins in his own blood, but to

make us kings and priests unto God and his Father. How estimable in the eyes of the holy angels is even one sinner that repenteth! How much more will they encamp around those who fear the Lord, and go forth to minister unto those who are heirs of salvation! And how estimable are they to each other! What joy is felt, when another is added to the church, and when it can be said of Zion that this and that man were born there! How lovely is the lisping of babes in Christ concerning their afflictive or pleasing experience; so that even their errors have something amiable in them, since their moans and complaints prove—if not to themselves, but to others—the existence of a new creature! How pleasing is the language of a comforted and re-assured soul, whilst exclaiming, “Come hither, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul!” What edification and instruction often flow from the lips of experienced Christians, when Jesus is in the midst of two or three who are assembled in his name!

Let me observe, fourthly, that cedar-trees are ever verdant. Green is the colour of hope, and Christ constantly imparts this to the wretched. However intricate thy circumstances, however great and manifold thy affliction, thou art not so comfortless, sinful, and unbelieving, as not to be permitted to place confidence in this verdant cedar. He continues the same Saviour, though every other tree may remain without fruit, and even without leaves. They that be planted in the house of God shall flourish in the courts of the Lord. The sap may indeed retire into the root; but though the trees, in autumn and winter, seem at a distance as if dried up, yet, more minutely inspected, they

are not so. Their seed is in them. When the vernal sun returns, these trees shall again shoot forth, and bear fruit a thousand fold. The severer the frost, and the drier the soil, the more completely are the weeds and vermin destroyed.

Those who have seen the cedar, assert that it is a tree of a very peculiar kind, which cannot be compared with any other. And this is the last observation I will make respecting the cedar. Christ may also be compared with many things, but is nevertheless very different, and much more glorious. Well may he, therefore, be called "Wonderful," and say of himself, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." His love is great; but its height surpasses all understanding. The greatest idea we can form to ourselves of his grace, is scarcely so much as a single ray compared with the whole light of the sun. The reality exceeds all belief. Not the half is told, nor can be told us, here below, and it requires an eternity to survey and become minutely acquainted with the kingdom of God in all its extent. Hence all praise, excepting that of the Son of God alone, is represented in Psalm lxxv. 1, as a silence; so little does it reach its sublime object.

Christians, as branches of this majestic and incomparable cedar, are also peculiar in their kind, as long as they remain out of the heavenly paradise. The most opposite qualities, of which the one seems to neutralize the other, so that both cannot possibly exist at the same time in one and the same person, are wonderfully united both in Christ and his members. To mention only a few points: how can Paul say of the

same person, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, yet possessing all things?" How can John write, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, and yet, at the same time, "He that is born of God, sinneth not?" How can it be said to the same Corinthians, "Ye come behind in no gift, and yet, "Covet earnestly the best gifts?" How does it agree together, when it is said, "Ye are perfect in him," and then, in the way of admonition, "Be perfect," and afterwards, in the way of confession, "Not as if I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after it?" Think you that it is easy to answer the question, "What is a Christian?" Remember that it is very difficult and problematical, so that Paul says to the Corinthians, "Know ye not your own selves?" Christians are no angels: they are, in one respect, far lower; in another, much higher: lower, by creation, according to which angels take the precedence; higher, on account of their union with Christ, by which they become the first fruits of the creatures. They are saints and sinners at the same time; ungodly and righteous; weak, and yet can do all things; inclined to fall, and yet invincible; immortal, although they die. There is none like them, for they are the sons and daughters of God.

Let no one therefore think, that Balaam stretches his bow too far, when he compares the church, first to the aloe, and then to the cedar. It is God himself who thus speaks through him. Balaam was not inclined to speak favourably of them; he did so because he was compelled, and was compelled because it was the Lord's will.

The prophet goes on to sketch, in a few bold outlines, the history of the people of God, which, in a few words, extends to the end of time. It seems to me that his prediction embraces two distinct periods. The first extends from the departure out of Egypt to the appearing of Jesus Christ, the great king; the other to the end of time, particularly to the great conversion of the heathen, to which the Jews, then converted, will powerfully contribute, since the living waters will be poured from their bucket. But with regard to the last glorious period, particular reference is made to it in the fourth and last prediction of the prophet.

We will not, however, consider his sayings so much in their prophetic reference, which would be too difficult, and might lead us too far, but rather cleave to that which is practical, that is, attend to it in the degree in which it has reference to every true Christian.

From this point of view, we hear the prophet first of all saying, "God, El, the mighty God brought him forth out of Egypt," which was not only a great benefit for Israel, but of the greatest importance for the whole kingdom of God, as well as a type of the great redemption effected by Christ, and which still manifests itself in its fruits and effects in the redemption of individual souls.

We will not now revert to the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt, but rather consider the deliverance of individual souls from the state of nature, and their introduction into a state of grace, and call this, figuratively, a deliverance out of Egypt, and a setting out on the road to Canaan.

Egypt has a mystic and figurative signification.

Thus it is said, in Rev. xi. 8, of a certain great city, that it is called spiritual Egypt, in which our Lord was crucified. This pleasant and uncommonly fruitful country, the only one where it never rains, but which is annually watered, and at the same time manured by the overflowing of the Nile—this highly singular country, so celebrated for its pyramids, and other ancient and immense edifices, whose colossal ruins excite the greatest astonishment, which has again distinguished itself, even in our days, by an important war against the Turkish sultan, is called in Hebrew, Mizraim, and takes its name from one of the sons of Ham, the son of Noah. This name is derived from a Hebrew word which signifies “straitening,” “opposing,” “oppressing.” And the fate of the children of Israel in Egypt, particularly during the last eighty years of their residence in that country, was actually such as is intimated by these significations. They were straitened, opposed, and oppressed. Into this we will not now enter, but consider this figuratively as the state of nature, in which every one continues until brought out of it by the mighty God.

He is straitened; he is in bonds of the most dreadful kind, because he does not feel nor perceive them, as long as he is unwilling to be free; since it is chiefly his will which binds him to the yoke of sin. Notwithstanding his slavery, he thinks himself free, and this enchanting darkness is an essential part of his singular slavery, which, in some measure, disappears with it. Some bonds are sufficiently visible and felt. Their wearers know and feel, that those who do the things that they do are worthy of death, and yet they not

only do them themselves, though occasionally with disgust and an accusing conscience, but have pleasure in them that act in a similar manner. How many slaves of vice perceive that, through their licentiousness, drunkenness, and love of gaming, they ruin their property, their good name, their families, and even their souls and their salvation, and yet are carried away to do things that are not convenient, not by the pleasure they derive from them, but by an unruly impulse, which they are unable and unwilling to control. It would be well if this were the case only with those who are the open servants of sin. But there are also secret bonds, which are not less destructive, though they do not manifest themselves so obviously, such as those fundamental evils, blindness, self-righteousness, and unbelief. Thus the individual, whilst in a state of nature, lies in the most dreadful bondage, from which nothing but the grace of the Almighty can liberate him.

Israel was striven against in Egypt, according to the second signification of the word, in such a manner, that their entire extirpation seemed inevitable. But this opposition does not limit itself to the man's natural state, in which he sides with his bitterest enemies, and is zealous in evil works, in which the devil blinds the minds of them that believe not, so as to prevent them from seeing even the clearest light, in the darkness of this world, and under its tyranny. He is then dead in sins. Of this conflict the individual first becomes aware when a better feeling is wrought in him; when he is willing to do good, and delights in the law of God after the inner man; he then finds how evil dwells

within him, and an arbitrary law, which keeps him in captivity to the law of sin.

And thus the third signification of the word, from whence Egypt is called Mizraim, becomes verified. The individual is distressed. The strong impulse to sin, on the one hand, and, on the other, the ever-recurring conviction that the following of this impulse is nothing else than hastening to hell; and he feels how his whole bias tends rapidly thither. His mind is distracted. He desires that which is good, will gladly pray, and yet can scarcely utter a sigh, and be devout, but is filled with wandering thoughts. He rejects that which is evil, and yet his memory reminds him only of that of which he wishes to know nothing more; his imagination is fertile in conjuring up a variety of foolish ideas, and alluring or tormenting imagery, and his desires threaten, like ungovernable coursers, to carry him away. The distress of the Israelites reached its height, in consequence of the commands of Pharaoh, that they should complete a certain quantity of work, or else be beaten, while they were deprived of every alleviation of their labour. The law commands, whilst threatening eternal punishment, whilst the will, devoid of power to do good, inclines to evil, so that sin is quickened and made exceeding sinful by the commandment. The oppressed soul now knows not what to do. If redemption is offered, the man scarcely hears it, in consequence of the distress and anguish of his heart, like the children of Israel, when Moses told them that they should be delivered from the burdens of Mizraim. But however painful this oppression may be, yet it affords a good intimation that deliverance is at hand. As long as you are living

careless and secure, in the love of the world, or in self-righteousness, as long as you know nothing of distress, alarm, and oppression, your case is dangerous, however little you may believe it. But the more you feel, believe, and perceive it, the more certain it is that your redemption draws nigh. Be of good cheer, therefore, and wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen your hearts.

XXI.

THE UNICORN.

NUMB. xxiv. 8.

“ God brought him forth out of Egypt ; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn : he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.”

BALAAM brings together the most excellent things with which he is acquainted in the kingdom of nature, to serve as types and figures of the glory of the church of Jesus Christ. From the vegetable world he selects for this purpose the aloe and the cedar ; he now turns to the animal kingdom, in which the lion and the unicorn are the most pre-eminent, and he makes use of these also to pourtray the glory of the redeemed Israelites. We will at present confine our attention to the unicorn, which the prophet had also mentioned in the previous chapter. We will draw some comparisons between this creature and the first-fruits of the creation of God, true Christians, who are become partakers of the divine nature, in order to behold in this mirror their peculiar excellency.

The natural history of the unicorn, called Reem in Hebrew, which intimates nothing of a horn, is obscure and enigmatical. Even in this there is something that resembles the true Christian. He is born of God; but if we ask, How can such a thing be? the mouth of truth itself gives us the most enigmatical reply: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The unicorn has been regarded as a fabulous animal, which never existed, except in the imagination of the inhabitants of the East, like the winged dragon, the chimera, and the sphinx. The angel of the covenant himself says to Joshua, the High Priest, believers are men "wondered at;" and has not the world of heathens and Jews, of wise men and fools, constantly regarded real Christians, with their Christ, as belonging to the jurisdiction of fables, monsters, enthusiasts, and men of limited capacity, and reviled them as fools, deceivers, or deceived?

But without further noticing the fact, that travellers of modern times assert, that they have seen this animal at a distance in the immense forests of India, nor even taking it for granted that such an animal still exists in the world, it cannot be doubted that it occupied a real place in the animal creation in the days of Job, Moses, and David. The sacred Scriptures frequently mention it. God himself says to the former, "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow, or will he harrow the vallies after thee? Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great?" The Prophet mentions his strength also in the words of

our text. In Psalm xcii. 10, we find David saying, "My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn;" and Moses, in his parting blessing, says of Ephraim and Manasseh, "His glory is like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." (Deut. xxxiii. 17.)

The qualities which the holy Scriptures apply to the Reem, or unicorn, are strength, courage, and liberty in a high degree. The ancients who speak of this animal, say it is afraid of nothing, and feared by all. Nothing is able to overcome it, but it overcomes every thing. Conscious of its superiority, it makes its couch where it pleases, and without apprehension. Even poison does it no injury. It is also observed in particular, with respect to this powerful animal, that it is a great friend of doves, and takes uncommon pleasure in the voice of the turtle-dove, and is greatly delighted when the latter confidentially alights upon its horn, and then remains standing, in order not to scare it away.

Now this animal and its properties, and especially its strength, Balaam selects, by superior divine inspiration, as a figure of redeemed Israel. "He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn;" or, as it may be rendered, the mighty God, who redeemed Israel out of Egypt, is to him as the strength of an unicorn. The figure is bold and sublime. The Christian is like an unicorn: what ideas does this awaken in us! A Christian is like the aloe and the cedar, and yet is nothing in himself; who can fathom it?

In accordance with this metaphor—one that did not proceed from Balaam himself, but from the Holy Spirit, who spoke by him—we consider the real Christian in his glory and sublimity, and not in his lowliness

and poverty. We do not let these confuse us, but call to mind how highly the Scriptures often speak of him. Recollect only expressions like the following : " Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." " Grow up to the divine nature. Be filled with the Spirit. We must become perfect, according to the perfect measure of the stature of Christ. I can do all things. I have all, and abound. Ye know all things. All things are yours. In all things we come off more than conquerors." And what does not the appellation, " Children of God," comprise ?

The unicorn is represented to us as a creature which has not its like. In order that the Christian may appear to us to be such a one, we must imagine him divested of certain concomitants, which will be finally done away with, but which, until that period, are only obstructions and limitations.

Before we pass on to the consideration of the glory of the children of God, we will cast a look at some of these restraining limitations. To these we reckon, generally speaking, our residence in this world, which the Apostle calls a being absent from the Lord. Christians are like exotic plants, which never perfectly succeed in a foreign soil and climate. Our High Priest refers to them in this character in his intercessory prayer, as those who are still in the world, as those whom the world hates, and connects with it the intercession, " Keep them, O Father ! from the evil that is in the world ;" predicts to them, also, that in the world they shall have tribulation. Abiding here below is not favourable to religion ; for as long as it lasts, we are in the territories of evil spirits, who steal about us with hostile intentions. If their influ-

ence is not always perceptible and discernible, yet it exists, and is like a fog, which restrains the full light of the sun. The enemy is continually seeking to sow tares amongst the wheat, and labours against the Lord and ourselves, so that we cannot do what we would, and our progress is against the stream. Hence the residing in this mortal tabernacle is a limitation and a hindrance. To the things of the kingdom of God belong a glorified body. Our present bodily frame would be unable to bear many things, but must succumb if they were communicated to it. "The spirit truly is willing," says Christ, "but the flesh is weak;" and Paul, "Whilst we are in this tabernacle, we groan, being burdened." The body, and that which concerns it, has also its cares, necessities, and claims, and thereby occasions many a restraint to the life from God within us, such as an unhappy temper, evil propensities, pain, sickness, and the like. As long as a Christian bears about with him this vile body, his unicorn-like strength and excellency cannot manifest itself. It is not the state of a winged butterfly, but that of the slow and creeping caterpillar.

Has not society also its restraints and limitations, as well as its claims and its incentives to edification? A large domestic establishment, and sphere of labour which brings us into contact with a variety of people, and claims and occupies the greatest part of our time and of our spiritual and bodily powers, unavoidable connections with men of perverse spirits, the vexations and cares which they occasion, their evil tempers, contrary views, opinions, assertions, and their mode of acting, are, in the case of many, hindrances from which they cannot and ought not to escape, however

much they may wish to do so. They are like people who travel, heavily burdened, on bad roads and in bad weather, who, notwithstanding, are compelled to proceed.

But the chief hindrance why we do not manifest more of the strength and superiority belonging to the children of God, lies in ourselves. We say, Such a one is a child of God; but this has only reference to his superior part, and not in every respect. That which was said of Rebecca, is true in their case, "There are two nations in thy womb." There is the new man and the old, flesh and spirit, together in the same person, so that "ye cannot do the things that ye would;" hence the warnings, such as the following; "Take heed, therefore, that there be in none of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but admonish one another daily, whilst it is called to-day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." "Put off the old man with his deeds, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it," &c.; all which would be unnecessary, if the Christian were entirely, thoroughly, and solely what he ought to be. But now, they that are Christ's, crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and the lamentation over the body of death still mingles with their hallelujahs.

Finally, the dispensations of God with reference to his church hitherto, necessarily cause it to be a church militant here below, so that here we see but in part,

and we are not yet perfect, nor have attained. If it were the will of God thoroughly to perfect, sanctify, and glorify his people here below, what could resist his will? But his wisdom has thought fit that it should be otherwise, and hence the riches of his pardoning grace in the forgiveness of so many faults is made the more apparent. The Christian becomes the more thoroughly acquainted with his natural depravity, and the power of divine grace is the more glorified in preserving that which is good in the soul, notwithstanding so much opposition. It was only at the moment of his death, that Christ himself was exonerated from the sin which lay upon him, and such is also the case with his members. It still remains to be seen what God will do in the latter days, when the weakest shall be as David.

These are some of the obstructions which restrain the perfect manifestation of the sons of God, and produce groans and travail. They are caused by strife and imperfection; we must look for complete perfection only in the world above.

Yet these concomitants of our present state ought not to bias and decide our judgment, or lead us to suppose that religion and a state of grace is something mean and insignificant. Notwithstanding the stable, the manger, the swaddling clothes, and even the accursed tree, Jesus is still the adorable Lord from heaven. A king may go about, without any of the signs of his regal dignity; yet those who know him, will still honour him as their king. Pearls, even in the ashes, are still pearls. A giant may lie in chains, and all is not gold that glitters. We ought to judge righteous judgment, and not form an opinion of the church of

Christ according to that which it is in itself, and without Christ, but what it is in and with him. In him it is all glorious within, and shall likewise become so without.

God appointed Balaam to praise, in the loftiest manner, the glory of redeemed Israel, although the latter, at that time, was still in a very critical state; and we are under obligation and justified in forming to ourselves a very lofty idea of Christians collectively, and of the church of Christ, and shall be unable to do otherwise, if the eyes of our minds are enlightened to know what is the hope of our calling, and his intention to make us like unto himself; to which every thing must necessarily contribute.

This high idea of the glory of our christian calling ought not to mislead us to think highly of ourselves, as if we were the people, and could look down upon others, which would cause the question to be put to us, "Who art thou, O man?" and the admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" the advice, "Thou standest by faith; be not, therefore, high-minded, but fear;" and the exhortation, "Condescend to men of low estate."

This view of the subject ought, on the contrary, to tend to prevent our being satisfied with our present state; for which Paul reproves the Corinthians. If we make a comparison between that which we really might have attained through grace, and our actual state, we shall find sufficient cause for shame and confusion of face.

It is thus that Paul treats the Corinthians; he grants them, indeed, every thing, and even allows that they shall judge angels; but at the same time reproves

them for being still carnal, and babes in Christ, who were hitherto unable to do any thing; even as he blames the Hebrews, for not having made sufficient progress since the time of their conversion, and for being still scholars, when they ought reasonably to have been masters. It is a bad symptom, when a person imagines that he already knows and has experienced every thing, that he possesses every thing, and therefore needs not to be more deeply established, nor to grow in grace, nor to be more lowly, believing, and devoted. Such a state would be a very dangerous one, and would evidence the pride which God resists, whilst to the humble he gives grace. Hence it is profitable to become duly acquainted with the glory of the christian religion; that we may not esteem ourselves above measure, but believe that we know nothing yet as we ought to know.

The lively idea of the glory of the christian religion ought, at the same time, to serve to incite our hunger and thirst after righteousness, so that we may increasingly experience it in ourselves, and "learning the principles of the doctrine of Christ," go on unto perfection, thus manifesting, that we have not received the grace of God in vain, but that it operates powerfully in us, as the servants of God, "by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by the Holy Ghost," causing us to grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

It ought to induce us to act kindly towards each other, and to bear each other's infirmities, well knowing that God can raise them up, and leave us in a state of barrenness; can bestow gifts upon and cause them to

rejoice, whilst he grieves and strips us of his graces, and can make them strong and us weak ; as also most humbly and heartily to thank God when he shows mercy to ourselves or others, induce us to rejoice in their prosperity, and to feel confident that God will bestow upon us, according to his abundant mercy, all that is needful for life and for godliness, that we may walk worthy of the gospel and the holy vocation wherewith he has called us, not because of what we have done, but of his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Lastly, these views of the glory of the christian religion encourage us to wait with patience. If we then become abundantly conscious that it doth not yet appear what we shall be, nor will not, as long we walk here below, and if we must let the grace of God suffice us, whilst we even occasionally experience the buffetings of Satan, and cannot be relieved of them, although we may have entreated the Lord thrice and oftener ; if we are obliged to despise our own selves and let ourselves be despised by others, perceiving that evil still adheres to us, when desirous of doing good ; we ought not to forget, however appearances may be against it, that soon every thing will assume another form, and imperfection be swallowed up of perfection. The Israelites were still encamped in the wilderness, in which they had wandered about, in the midst of numberless difficulties, for almost forty years ; and yet God causes them to be depicted under the most splendid imagery which nature can furnish, and says of them, " He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn."

The Prophet speaks of Israel in a state of deliverance. He may well say, that his eyes are opened ; for

he sees far into futurity. His look is not confined to the Israelites, who then lay encamped before him, nor as dwelling on the other side of Jordan; but he has that Israel in view with its divine King, which should in future times be made complete by the engrafting of believers out of the heathen world. Nor does his look terminate there, but extends even to the true Canaan above. Hence his descriptions are so sublime, because he unites the beginning of redemption and its end, which belong together, since the glorious termination is as certain as the mean beginning. "Faithful is he who hath called you, who also will do it."

"Happy art thou, therefore, O Israel, saved by the Lord, who is like unto thee!" Happy are you, ye redeemed of the Lord! your strength is like that of an unicorn, and the mighty God is to you as its strength; he is the shield of your help, and the sword of your victory.

But if all these dignities and glories are of never-fading beauty and eternal duration, are they not capable of exciting your desires in such a manner, that you wrestle, beg, and pray, saying, "Give me to drink of the living water?" He would then give you from that fountain, which would be in you a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. How long will you still stand idle in the market-place of this world? Or has no one yet hired you?

Be not, however, like Issachar, pleased with repose, and crouching between the borders; nor like those who are divided between Christ and the world, and hold entirely neither with the one nor the other; ye cannot serve both these masters at the same time. If Baal be God, serve him; but if Jehovah be God, cleave

to him; do not continue lukewarm; be either cold or hot; be diligent and repent, lest the Lord spue you out of his mouth; “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

If ye are really the redeemed of the mighty God, remember that he who hath delivered you, will still daily deliver, and at length perfectly rescue you from all your distresses, and bring you safe to his heavenly kingdom. Be not full, but hunger and thirst after righteousness; not rich, but empty, that he may fill you with his blessings. In your lowliness, glory in your exaltation, and in your exaltation, boast of your lowliness; and when you say, with Paul, “I am not inferior to any of the apostles,” add also, with him, “although I am nothing.”

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

XXII.

ISRAEL'S STRENGTH.

JOHN says, in his First Epistle, iii. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The expression, "be like him," is an astonishing one; but John had especial reasons for expressing himself in such a sublime manner. What visions had he beheld! the city which is the home of the elect, whose pavement is of pure, transparent gold, whose houses are of precious stones, and whose twelve gates are of pearl; which has not, indeed, any temple or sun; for the whole city is a temple, and the Lamb the sun; and hence there is no night, no sorrow, no crying, nor tears. He had seen the church collectively, as a woman clothed with the sun, having on her head a crown of twelve stars, and the moon beneath her feet. He had seen, or at least heard one saying unto him, "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb," and whose majestic appearance was such, that John was on the point of falling down before him, and paying him homage as a king; but this he refused, because he was his fellow-servant and

brother. John saw from this what he also would become, when imperfection should finally give way to perfection. Paul had also been in heaven, but could not state any thing of what he had seen, because human language has no words for it. He wishes, however, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened to know the hope of our calling.

We are, therefore, saved and glorified, even here below, though it be but in hope. Of this we purpose to treat further in our present meditation.

NUMB. xxiv. 8.

“God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.”

Let us, on this occasion, contemplate a little more closely the picture which Balaam draws of the church of Christ, in the words, “He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn;” or, as it may be more impressively rendered, “God is to him like the strength of an unicorn.”

He considers the Israel of God by no means in themselves, but from the point of view of their union with Christ their head. He does not speak of them as they appear in the present state, but as they shall appear, when Christ, who is in them, shall fully manifest himself to them. He shall at length come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that love him. Then shall they shine as the brightness of the firmament in their Father's kingdom. He does

so occasionally, in different individuals, even here below ; but on the whole, their life is hid with Christ in God ; and they walk by faith, not by sight. However, it is sometimes granted them to consider themselves according to what they are in Christ ; and in him they are all glorious, and without spot.

The basis of Israel's strength, here compared to that of an unicorn, is Christ, his blood, and all the glorious things he has purchased by it. They are justified by his righteousness ; they are perfect in him. If the head be taken from the body, it dies. Take the sun from the earth, it would soon pass away. Take Christ from the church, and its fate would be inevitable. Nay, if he withdraw himself from the pardoned sinner, as he occasionally does for the wisest and most salutary purposes, all salvation departs, as if it had never been. But here we are speaking merely of the feeling ; for, in reality, he dwells in the regenerate soul, though for a time he may keep himself concealed. Christ is the foundation on which the glorious temple of true religion is built, and the more we are rooted and grounded in him, the more we perceive that Balaam's metaphorical language is not exaggerated, when he says, " The strength of Israel is like that of the unicorn."

This strength is something admirable, holy, and glorious. Let us consider it in a few of its features. The unicorn, for instance, is unacquainted with fear. The Christian, as such, is so likewise. When Christ bestows his gracious influences on the soul, it is not afraid, whatever may occur ; even, as the Scriptures say, though the sea roar and be troubled, and though the earth be removed. And what a miraculous display

of grace it is to work such a change in a timid mortal, as to make him afraid of nothing, because he has really no reason to be so, and much more so than the unicorn in the natural world ! Divine grace can perform such miracles, and really does so at its pleasure. But all must be ascribed to grace alone. It can make a valiant eagle of a timid dove, and furious lions of helpless sheep ; but if it withdraw itself, they stand and tremble at a shaking leaf. Therefore, no one has reason to despond, nor any to boast. The Lord can make the weak strong, and the strong weak, and really does so at his pleasure, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of us, and that the glory may be rendered undiminished unto him alone, which we otherwise so readily take to ourselves. Although all things are ours, yet we have nothing ; and though we have nothing, yet we possess all things. The one is as true as the other, and both are verified in true Christians, who are real wonders. But how can a Christian be any thing else than fearless and courageous, as soon and as long as he sees the reasons for being so, and which are afforded him in Christ Jesus ? that he is given us by the Father ; that he suffered for us, and has finished every thing ; that he was crucified, and became a curse for us, in order that he might redeem us from the curse, and purchase for us the blessing, thus removing from us the sentence of death, and procuring for us the most perfect title to life ; and when he sees the reasons which lie in his resurrection and ascension, how can the individual clearly apprehend these grounds of faith, without being filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ?

But of what should he be afraid? Of the sacred majesty of God? It is in Christ the reconciled majesty of a reconciled Father, whose love casts out all fear. Certainly, considered out of Christ, and supposing there were no Jesus, no mediator between God and man, God would be a consuming fire. But now are we reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. We have, therefore, in this respect, nothing to fear, but every thing to hope from him; "for God is love."

But the law? Certainly, the law is a pure mirror of the glory of God, and a mirror in which we behold the holiness we ought to possess. We ought, also, diligently to look into it, that we may become thoroughly acquainted with our natural deformity, with its requirements, which we are unable to fulfil; and be conscious how it condemns us in all things, and stops our mouths. But there is not merely a law, which preaches condemnation; there is also a gospel which preaches righteousness, and is especially that which ought to be promulged. It preaches to us Jesus Christ as crucified, as full of grace and truth, as the new and living way, by which we sinners may draw near to God as the Saviour of sinners, and as our righteousness and strength. And with respect to the law: he has already fulfilled it in our stead, so that by his obedience many are made righteous. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and even from the law itself, so that we are no longer under it, but under grace; are dead to it, and freed from it, and bound to another husband, even Christ, and have received a filial spirit, by which we cry, "Abba, Father!" When this is made apparent to us, the fear which the law had excited, disappears. It has

then no more demands upon us, but is abundantly fulfilled through our surety, Jesus Christ; for by him infinitely more has been paid, than it had any right to demand. It requires a human obedience, and receives a divine one, which is imputed to me. And thus I have infinitely more than I need.

But ought not sin to keep us in continual fear? Will it not paralyze all my boldness?—sin, which I not only formerly served with delight, but which still cleaves to me? And what consolation does the gospel afford me in this respect? It by no means teaches me to think lightly of sin, but to detest and flee from it as the greatest evil, and the source of all evil; it teaches me to regard sin as the cause of the divine wrath; but it also shows me the way how I can be delivered, solely and certainly delivered from it. Not in a legal manner, by opposing the commandment to my sinful inclinations, and labouring to practise that which is enjoined, and to overcome that which is contrary to the latter. However much this path may commend itself to the natural mind and understanding, yet sin is only excited by it, and sinful desires awakened, as those experience in themselves, who seriously attempt to travel upon this road. But what a glorious path, though entirely unknown to reason, does the desirable gospel of the grace of God reveal to us! If sin, and every individual sin, even the smallest sin, possesses an eternally damning power, the gospel points out a method by which the sinner may boldly, though in an incredible manner, ask, “Who is he that condemneth?” Ought not this, when rightly understood, to afford fearlessness and boldness? In this way God reveals him, as justifying

the ungodly, not by works, but by faith; a way to become as righteous by true faith in Christ, as if I had never had nor committed sin, and as if I had even fulfilled all the obedience which Christ has yielded for me. Ought not he, therefore, to whom it is granted, to look into this new world, to be as fearless as an unicorn?

But sin has still a dreadful power, by which it rules over, and takes and keeps us captive. We miscalculate, when we suppose, that if we only seriously purpose that which is good, we are then in a condition to practise it; and that if we are disinclined to evil, we may also cease from the doing of it. This mind must, indeed, be in us; but a very great and universally acknowledged Christian, even the Apostle Paul himself, says, "The good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. vii. 19.) And if we are really actuated by the will to do good, we shall become conscious, that the evil still cleaves to us; and that in us, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. This grievous state, it may be said, would certainly make it impossible to be courageous, even though we possessed the boldness of an unicorn. And it is under these circumstances that Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" But soon he adds, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin shall not have dominion over us, seeing that we are not under the law, but under grace. For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. "In all things we come off more than conquerors." Is not this a boldness like that of an unicorn? The same Christ, who, with his innocence and perfect righteous-

ness, covers from the eyes of God the sin in which I was conceived and born, but which by his grace I heartily hate and flee, is the same who sanctifies me, because he is made unto me sanctification. His is the kingdom, and he will establish it in all his people, and hence they may boast, and really do boast, as often as their faith is strong, saying, he always giveth us the victory.

But what shall we say to the sufferings, which Christ informs every one who wishes to be his disciple, he must take upon him as his daily cross and particular portion? It is true, that religion does not require of us not to be sorrowful in the season of trial. It does not directly say, "Be joyful," but, be patient in tribulation. Christ himself describes his followers as those who weep here. But he also says, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!" Individuals may be enabled, even in great bodily sufferings, not only to be patient, but even joyful. When Stephen was on the point of being stoned, his countenance shone like that of an angel. And whence was it? He saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. No one could close heaven against him, nor the rage of man restrain its consoling influence. Paul endured a suffering which proceeded not from man, but from a messenger of Satan, which was of an extremely painful nature, although we cannot exactly state wherein it consisted; yet it pained him deeply. He prayed for a time, for the removal of this suffering, but in vain. At length the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is perfected in weakness." He was then bold as an unicorn, even in this suffering,

and exclaimed, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities; for when I am weak, then am I strong." No other boasting was left him. But whatever sufferings may befall a believer, he is enabled to consider them in the light which the gospel sheds upon them, and then he even glories in tribulation, because tribulation worketh patience. And though no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, yet it is a mark of adoption, and is profitable to them that are exercised thereby, that they may become partakers of his holiness; whilst it works out a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory to those who look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

Israel's boldness is like that of an unicorn; for according to the gospel, death is done away. There is no more death, because Christ has become its plague and poison by his death and resurrection. The universal christian creed, therefore, knows nothing of sin, except its forgiveness, and immediately connects with it, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Merely the form of death remains. The believer is persuaded that he shall not die, because he that is the truth hath said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Regarded in its proper evangelical light, that which we call dying, is nothing else but a means of being perfectly delivered from sin, and every danger and evil, and made partakers of the most glorious blessings. No wonder, then, that we see believers, who possess this light, depart in triumph.

To be brief, the confidence and strength of believers is not only like that of an unicorn, but far exceeds it.

However great a creature's strength may be, yet it has its limits. But believers are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The strength of Christ is mighty in their weakness. And thus they are able to do all things through Christ strengthening them, although without him they can do nothing.

If this were not the case, how could there continue to be a church of Christ upon earth, since men and Satan have never been willing to tolerate either Christ the head, or his members, although obliged to do so? The work is of God, and therefore cannot be suppressed.

This is also true with respect to individual Christians. They still live in the flesh, and this implies much that is evil. They are exposed to numberless temptations, which not only assail them from without, but what is worse than all, from within also. What would become of them, since Satan, also, mingles himself in the attack, if their strength was not greater than his, who is in the world?

If, then, thou seekest to become something really great and glorious, and greater and more glorious than human understanding can comprehend, become a real Christian. Of thyself thou art unable. But all things are possible with God; and his strength shall pervade thee, until he present thee before his face, holy and unreprouable. Amen.

XXIII.

ISRAEL BLESSED.

NUMB. xxiv. 9—13.

“ He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion : who shall stir him up ? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

“ And Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together ; and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

“ Therefore now flee thou to thy place ; I thought to promote thee unto great honour : but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.

“ And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sendest unto me, saying,

“ If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind ; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak ?”

WE have here the close of the third prophecy, and the beginning of the fourth. Balaam and Balak are the chief individuals mentioned in the text.

“ Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” Such is the manner in which Ba-

laam concludes his third prophecy. He that blesses another, proves, by so doing, that he loves him, otherwise he would not bless him. The party here concerned is Israel, the people of God, who are loved by none but those who belong to them. John, in his First Epistle, iii. 14, declares it to be a certain characteristic that a person has passed from death unto life, if he love the brethren, or, as he says, in chap. v. 1, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Hence he who loves a true Christian because he is so, is infallibly himself a real Christian in deed and in truth. A genuine Christian might be loved for the sake of his natural qualities, because he has something pleasing and captivating in his deportment, even as some are really amiable, whilst others are repulsive and objectionable, and of a rude exterior. A genuine Israelite may be loved on account of his fidelity, his disinterestedness, and the services he renders us; but all this would not amount to brotherly love, to love to the individual because of his religion. It is often, at the same time, a cause of regret that such an otherwise agreeable individual is a Christian; or, as such persons would rather say, a melancholy man, an enthusiast, a mystic, &c. which would be regarded as a great fault. Nay, Christ says, and experience confirms it, that on account of religion a man's foes are those of his own household; that Christ does not bring peace, but war; that the former friendly connections are disturbed, and even rent asunder; so that parents hate and persecute their children. Genuine brotherly love is of a very different kind. It loves a true Christian because he is so, and because it perceives in him the traces of divine grace, and some fea-

tures of the divine image, though in other respects there may be nothing pleasing or captivating.

There is something very peculiar in this brotherly love, so that Paul says, "Ye are taught of God to love one another." And we may justly say, "Beloved be he who loveth thee, O Israel," for he is assuredly beloved of God, but the world hates him.

It is from this love that blessing proceeds. Having here reference to men, it means wishing and praying for that which is good upon the individual. And to this belongs much that Christians mutually wish and pray for, even as intercession is a pleasing christian duty. Earthly things are not in this case of primary importance, as in those who are earthly-minded; such persons know and desire nothing better for themselves and others than health, a long and happy life, prosperity, and the like—things which, though estimable, are earthly and transitory; whilst not a thought is bestowed on the soul and its salvation, peace with God, true faith, and such like real, eternal, and supremely important blessings. But he blesses Israel in a proper manner who desires its increase, wishes and prays for an addition to the church of such as shall be saved, and that children may be born to the victorious Saviour as dew from the womb of the morning. The most pleasing intelligence which they can receive is, that this and that individual have been drawn to God, that they have been distressed on account of their sins, have been comforted and gladdened, and have obtained faith. Such news is the most agreeable to them of all, and they feel deeply and joyfully interested in it, and can never hear enough of it. They bless Israel by

wishing the increase of its members. They bless the people of God by desiring for them an abundance of the means of grace, particularly that the word may be properly and purely preached to them, and that God would send forth hosts of evangelists to places far and near. What is more pleasing to them, next to their own salvation, than to hear that in such and such a place the light of the gospel has arisen, and that the lovers of the truth do not suffer a distance even of several leagues to hinder them from attending edifying discourses, as is at present the case in many districts where the gospel, which seemed to be dead, has again revived, and has awakened, not only those who preach it, but has also touched the ears and hearts of those who listen to it, of which we could relate a very pleasing instance.

He that blesses Israel, wishes it a rich abundance of the gifts of grace. Thus we hear Paul saying, in Romans xv. 13, “ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost,” even as all his epistles are interwoven with prayer for blessings upon those to whom he writes. To this add the wish for enlightening, that God would enlighten the eyes of their understandings, that they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Further, establishment in the faith, that their hearts might be established by grace, and no longer tossed about with every wind of doctrine, and that God would work in them the work of faith with power. Then follows love, respecting which he desires that it may be shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost, together with a variety of consolations and encouragements which he intermingles in his valuable epistles.

In blessing, a variety of lovely and pious feelings manifest themselves towards our fellow Christians. Are they in a state of suffering, heartfelt compassion is expressed, which weeps with them that weep, and comforts where it is able. Is any one richly comforted by Christ, we rejoice with them that do rejoice. We embrace in affectionate good wishes the whole of the christian church, that all its members may attain to the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God, and that the kingdom of Christ may come with power. Blessing is an act of the heart, and is, as it were, natural to the Christian. It expresses itself in heartfelt words, in salutations, and particularly in intercessions.

Now all who thus wish prosperity to Jerusalem shall be also blessed, and are so already, otherwise they would not have such sentiments. The Lord will prosper them. How much, also, does he love his people, since he blesses all who love them! All that cleave to the Lord, cleave also to his church, as do the holy angels, who are sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. Hence, also, in the words which the prophet is obliged to speak, the will of God is contained, that all things must co-operate to bless his people; even their enemies must serve them. Of this Balaam is a speaking proof, whose mouth is compelled to bless, instead of cursing, as he intended. The most horrible persecutions have befallen the professors of the christian religion, so that nothing else was to be expected than that every one would take good heed not to join the persecuted flock, which was exposed to

such imminent peril. But the opposite was the case, so that it was even said, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church;" for the Christians increased the more horribly they were persecuted. God still preserved alive as many as he pleased; and it is almost incredible that such men as Luther, Calvin, and others, died a natural death. But who shall injure those whom God protects? And such is still the case. All who love God possess the valuable privilege, that, as real kings, every thing must be subservient to them. Such a privilege is worth more than a throne, which is nothing without it, and has no duration. And certainly, if Balaam is compelled to bless, when intending to curse, what is there that is not subservient to the people of God? Assuredly all trials, afflictions, temptations, and Satan himself, even as his messenger, was of service to Paul in preserving him in humility, and against self-exaltation. The storm on the sea, which so terrified the disciples, tended to make them more clearly perceive their weakness, as well as admiringly and adoringly to exclaim, "Who is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

Blessed is he that blesseth thee, O Israel, from his heart; which Balaam certainly did not do, but by constraint. But cursed is he who curseth thee. Hatred lies at the basis of such an act. Jesus tells his disciples beforehand, "Ye must be hated by all men for my name's sake." And such is really the case, however incomprehensible the cause of it may be. For what harm does this name to mankind? What occasion does it give for men to hate it and others also for its sake? Is not in this name salvation, and is there any other name given under heaven to mankind

by which they can be saved? This would be incomprehensible, and an entirely inexplicable phenomenon, did we not know that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Hence it is, that even nearest relatives become hostile and opposed to those of their families who are apprehended and changed by grace, misconstrue every thing, and even oppress and persecute them.

This hatred, therefore, is the cause why they curse the people of God—that is, wish them every evil, and that they may be rooted out of the earth. Of this we have a recent instance in the case of a clergyman of high rank, who, in an assembly of the clergy of the district, congratulated his brethren in office that the last pietist, as he called true Christians, had been removed, and wished that such like people might never again settle amongst them. They curse the followers of Christ, by applying to them a variety of opprobrious epithets, even as Christ told them beforehand, that the name Belzebub would not be thought too bad to designate himself and his disciples. They are also accused of dangerous doctrines, and iniquitous lives, and it causes joy when one or other of them is overtaken in a fault, and according to it the rest are all judged. Happy for them, that they are also all judged according to one, even Christ. The world seeks to trouble the Christian in the use of the means of grace, and would gladly deprive him of them entirely, to re-establish antichrist in supreme authority. If, especially in districts where the people are not accustomed to hear the word of God, and it is become rare, an individual rises up who preaches the gospel with power and success, all are immediately in arms against him, and the most disgraceful attempts are frequently made to stop

his mouth, and incite the magistracy against him. In short, if it were in the power of mankind to effect it, there would be an end of the gospel.

These are wicked and ungodly men, and instruments of Satan, although they deck out and disguise their hostility to true religion in a variety of ways, and would gladly make it appear that they only wish for truth and uprightness, and that they are the people, and wisdom will die with them. The devil, this evil adversary of the christian name, stands at the head, and it is not his fault that he succeeds no better. "They would gladly swallow us up quick," says the Psalmist. But the Lord is our refuge.

Hence Balaam, who was also one of these wicked children of the devil, and who in his heart would gladly have cursed Israel, was forced against his will to add, "Cursed be such characters." Their wicked intrigues prove unsuccessful, however wily and powerfully they may act. Frequently the most violent adversaries become, through divine grace, the most zealous partizans and friends of Christ, of which the Apostle Paul is a most striking instance; and how many open calumniators and blasphemers have been added to the church, and become believers! Israel shall and must prosper. All that seek the ruin of the church only prepare their own. And this is true also with regard to every individual Christian. They shall be preserved, notwithstanding the attacks that are made upon them from without and within, for they shall never perish.

Is not this one of the most astonishing and wonderful narratives in the whole of the Old Testament? That an ass should speak is by no means so wonderful, though dumb by nature, as that Balaam should say

the opposite of what he intended. A more striking example of the power of the divine government is scarcely to be found. What encouragement does it not, at the same time, contain to trust in God, that he is powerful enough to deliver us out of the greatest adversities, and to cause them to yield us the greatest benefits, even as he is wont, on the whole, to cause light to shine out of darkness, and to help those that are the most needy the most gloriously.

It may be easily supposed what an impression this made upon king Balak. Kings are wont to believe that they must succeed in all that they undertake, yet his intentions against Israel were entirely frustrated. This excited his wrathful indignation; he strikes his hands together, commands Balaam to be gone, and strangely says, "I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but lo, *the Lord* hath kept thee back from honour." How comes this enemy of God and his people to speak thus, and to mention the Lord in such a manner, and ascribe to him the want of success? Of such small importance is it, when natural men occasionally speak in a pious strain. The king does not feel at all induced to make peace with God, whom he regards as his adversary; but endeavours to carry his own purposes into effect in opposition to God. Thus incorrigible is man, unless God inwardly regenerates his will anew.

What a wretched figure does Balaam likewise present. He excuses himself in the manner he had already done to Balak, by saying that he was not permitted to speak as he wished in his heart, otherwise he would have cursed Israel to Balak's entire satisfaction. But he found it impossible to do so. O how horrible is the

human heart ! Abominations enough are committed, but what would be the result, if the Almighty God did not set bounds to it, and if Satan were entirely let loose, since, with his extreme subtlety, he is at the same time so wicked. How is it possible? might self-love enquire, notwithstanding the reality of the thing.

Let the whole, therefore, serve to humble us, whilst acknowledging our desperate depravity, and to increase our consciousness of the necessity and indispensableness of Jesus Christ, and our confidence in him. Behold the privilege of true Christians ! “ Blessed is he that blesseth thee.” Amen.

XXIV.

THE STAR OF JACOB.

NUMB. xxiv. 17, 18.

“ I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

“ And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies ; and Israel shall do valiantly.”

BALAK, highly incensed by what Balaam had uttered, drives him away from him. Balaam departs, but promises to advise him how to act, which he did by inciting Balak to entangle Israel in a heinous sin, by tempting the people to practise Midianitish idolatry, and to commit whoredom, which horrible advice proved but too successful, and inflamed the anger of God against them. Balaam now utters his fourth and last prediction. If we contemplate it in all its extent, we find that it has reference, not only to the times that were then at hand, but also that it is not yet entirely accomplished. I cannot enter upon a complete explanation of the whole of this prophecy ; and we will

therefore direct our chief attention to the remarkable words of our text.

Balaam speaks of an individual whom he describes as a ruler who should come out of Israel, to whom he gives a sceptre out of Israel, and mentions the loss which Israel's foes should sustain, and the benefit that Israel would derive from him; and finally represents him under the figure of a star.

We have here, therefore, an obvious prediction concerning Christ. He calls him one who should rise out of Jacob as a ruler. Here we find three things noticed respecting him. He appears first as an individual; secondly, as coming out of Jacob; and thirdly, as a ruler.

Well may Christ be announced as one who has not his like, and with whom none can compare. To explain this in some measure, we observe, that no man was or is like this man, Jesus Christ. He alone was without sin, and the only one who, as man, had no father, although he had a human mother. He was pure from all innate, and consequently from all actual sin, although in all points tempted like as we are; which, however, rendered it truly obvious how pure he was; so that it was easier to press oil out of a flint, than the smallest sinful thought out of his human nature, which would necessarily have been otherwise the case, in consequence of the violence of the temptations. At his birth the heavenly hosts sang, "Good will to men!" and God himself exclaimed more than once, "With him I am well pleased!" and he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man, alike nearly related to each. He has put away the enmity which existed, not only be-

tween Jews and heathens, but between God and us. He placed himself between us and God, that the lightnings of his wrath might not smite us, but that the beams of his love might refresh us under the shadow of his wings. He is our Intercessor with the Father, who pleads for us, and thereby procures us salvation and every blessing. Even we also are enjoined to pray in his name, as if it were he, and not we ourselves, who prayed. He is the only sacrifice for sin—the sacrifice once and for ever offered. Of every other sacrifice which had been previously offered, or which might still be arbitrarily brought, it is said, “I have no pleasure in them.” But this one offering perfects for ever them that are sanctified. It is eternal and complete. On account of its excellency, it was only once offered in the fulness of time, when this wondrous Paschal Lamb offered itself without spot unto God by the Holy Spirit. It is, so to speak, the axis and centre around which every thing revolves; and the sole, but perfect foundation, on which our whole salvation rests. He is the only name, and there is salvation in no other; the only Saviour, and beside him there is none else. However much we might fatigue ourselves in our own strength, we should effect nothing, and only experience the greatness of our sin and depravity, and that, spiritually, we cannot make a single hair white or black. But at the same time, we ought to become conscious that no wretchedness and misery is so great from which he cannot, by a single word, deliver us, as in a moment. He alone can save; to him we are referred, and on him we are cast. No salvation is to be found, either in ourselves or in any other creature. Hence we make him our sole refuge; hence our heart’s desire is to—

wards him; and our trust and confidence is in him. He saves us, and that entirely, both as regards body and soul, and in every respect. He delivers us from the wrath of God, forgives all our sins, rescues us from the power of the devil, though his attacks may be like those of a roaring lion; and he sanctifies and renews our natures after his image. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands. Hence we hope to the end for the grace that shall be revealed, and accept him completely as our teacher, high priest, and king. For all that is in him is most desirable, yea, indispensable, and becomes increasingly so to the soul. He saves completely, so that nothing more remains to be wished for. His people experience this, not all at once, but by degrees. They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Their path leads through a variety of trials, some easy, others severe. The soul feels occasionally so sanctified, that corruption is scarcely perceptible; Satan is trodden under foot; nothing is then more easy than by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh; to believe, love, and hope; and there are seasons in which it is difficult to exercise these graces, so that we experience that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. But the glorious termination approaches ever nearer, we obtain increasing insight into divine truth; we ourselves and Christ become increasingly manifest. He saves without any merit of our own; for by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. It is true, indeed, that we must have greatly decreased and been humbled, before we can heartily assent to this, and come to him to buy wine and milk without money and without price. Jesus is willing to save. It is his

office and occupation; for he came to seek and to save that which was lost. For this he yielded up his life; for this he sends forth his Spirit and his blood. He is the one thing needful, and is wholly and all-sufficient.

If we wish to consider him in other respects as the only One, he is the only way, and beside him there is no means of attaining the end. He, and he alone, is the way and the means of escaping from sin itself, as well as from all its punishment, and the way to the attainment of rest, and peace, and future glory. He is not a mere guide, pointing out to us the road, and exclaiming, "This is the way, walk ye in it, and turn neither to the right hand nor to the left;" this would be of little avail to such a people as we are. But Christ says to the soul, I am the way in which thou canst have life, and have it more abundantly; on which, indeed, no unclean person can go up, nor he that is still secretly in league with sin; who does not receive Jesus as gladly for his sanctification as his justification, and on which no ravenous beast is found, whilst the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.

But what shall we say more of this only One? We should never come to an end. He is the shepherd of his sheep, their pasture, and the door which opens into it. He gives us his flesh for our food, and his blood to drink. The greater are our necessities, the further does his grace extend. Hence he is held up to us as the only object of our confidence, the supreme object of our esteem and love. "To you that believe he is precious," and becomes increasingly so. Jesus Christ is our hope, our joy, our only refuge.

Now of him the prophet says, He shall come out of Jacob and rise out of Israel; for "salvation is of the Jews." Jacob, who, after his remarkable conflict with God, obtained the name of Israel, was he from whom, through Judah and David, the Saviour of the world was to come. It was he to whom the whole economy with the Jewish nation had reference; to him the whole of the temple service pointed, as well as a variety of persons, things, and rites.

He calls him a ruler, and represents him under the figure of a sceptre, that mark of regal power and authority. He speaks of his acts, as crushing, destroying, and taking captive, as regards the enemies of himself and his people, and as giving the victory to his friends. Neither are to be understood literally, but both in a spiritual sense. Christ, the ruler, entered into the most important and successful war for his people, in which he overthrew and destroyed his enemies. In the enumeration of these latter, Satan stands at the head, that prince of darkness, that strong man armed, that roaring lion, the god of this world, who deceives and holds captive the whole world. But a stronger than he came upon him, bound, and overcame him, so that the people of God obtain the victory, and come off more than conquerors in all things. He hath redeemed us from the power of darkness, and they that believe on him, go from strength to strength, until all is overcome. The second not less terrible enemy, so superior to us in our own strength, is that most dreadful monster, sin. He, the most Holy One, took it upon himself, and bore it in his own body on the tree. He atoned for, covered, and blotted it out, and opposed to it his blood and quickening Spirit, by

which he gained a perfect victory for his people, so that sin can neither condemn nor reign over them. And having overthrown these two principal foes, every other difficulty is removed at the same time. Precious sceptre ! Happy is he to whom this sceptre is inclined, which saves the trembling Esther ; he shall not perish, but live for ever. He continues his victories in his people, until he has brought them safely through to perfect glory.

He is the star of Jacob. He is the day-spring from on high, to rise upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death ; he is the bright and morning star, and how precious are his beams when he rises in the heart ! The darker the night of distress and sorrow on account of sin, and the more dense the obscurity of the temptation which preceded it, so much the more lovely is the light of this star, full of grace and truth. Do we look with pleasure at the sparkling and glimmering of the stars in the natural firmament ? what is that compared with the radiance of this eternal star in its ravishing and manifold splendour, streaming forth life and peace, strength, and light of life ? He that has once beheld him, desires to behold him continually, and cannot do otherwise. We only see the stars in their own light, and it would be unavailing, if, in order to see them, we kindled many fires and torches. Nor can this star be seen, except by its own light.

It does not always shine alike lovely ; nor does it always shed its light ; neither do its enlightening rays always fall upon pleasing objects ; for our poverty, misery, unbelief, and other sins, are amongst the objects respecting which we must necessarily be enlightened.

Do not be terrified and dismayed when this is the case; but, on the contrary, rejoice and give thanks; and if you are unable to do this, which may probably be difficult, there are others who can. It will eventually be your turn to rejoice; for in due time he will wipe the tears from your eyes, deliver your feet from falling, and your souls from death. You are stars in his hand; shine with diversified brightness, until at length you shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of your Father. Amen.

XXV.

ISRAEL'S SIN AND PUNISHMENT.

ONE of the most remarkable narratives related to us in the Bible, is that of Gideon and the Midianites, which we read in the book of Judges, chapters vi. and vii.

The Midianites severely oppressed the children of Israel, by divine permission, as a punishment for their idolatry. Their sufferings were great. At length their hearts were softened, they were constrained to flee to the Lord for refuge, and to cry unto him. Happy are they on whom affliction produces this effect ! The Lord now sent, first, a prophet unto them, to point out to them their sins as the cause of all their misery, and itself as the greatest evil ; for the knowledge of sin is the first thing in religion, both as respects its commencement and progress. This was an intimation of returning favour ; for when the sinner begins to weep over his sins, heaven begins to rejoice over him. God did still more. Instead of a prophet, he now sent an angel of the Lord. This was no created angel, but the Son of God himself : hence the language is soon changed, and he receives the appellation which peculiarly belonged to him. For we read, “ the Lord said.” Whom did he address ? A young and powerful man, named

Gideon, who was threshing wheat. And the Lord said to him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!" But Gideon objected to this salutation, and said, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? The Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." He was therefore timid and dismayed. But the Lord looked upon him, as he subsequently did upon Peter, and Gideon felt inwardly encouraged and strengthened, and thus the Lord said further to him, "Go in this thy might!" Gideon again confessed his inability, and said, "O my Lord! where-with shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house." And the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon's mind was now at ease. But he appears, on the whole, as one whose faith is weak, who is easily shaken, and continually requires fresh encouragement. And this the result soon proved. All at once he perceived who it was that spoke with him, and that suddenly vanished out of his sight. Gideon then exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord God! for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face!" and doubtless thought, as Manoah did afterwards, that he must surely die. But he was soon re-assured; for the Lord said unto him, "Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." He now felt greatly encouraged, and applied the precious name to God, "Jehovah Shallum," the God of peace.

When the Midianites marched forth in great numbers against Israel, the Lord arrayed Gideon with courage and strength. He ordered the trumpet to be blown throughout the land, and collected thirty-two thousand

men around him. But his courage now forsook him again. New doubts disturbed him. He again inquired of God whether he was really in earnest in saying that he would deliver Israel by him. He asks for one new sign after another, although, at the same time, he is afraid of offending God by it.

But now the tables are turned. Having put God so frequently to the test, God puts him in return to the test. He says that the people are too many, and that he cannot give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel should say, "Mine own hand hath saved me." He was therefore told to make proclamation, that whoever was timid and fearful, which Gideon was in reality also, might return home. And of these there were twenty-two thousand. But Gideon was obliged to remain. God again repeated that the people were too many; and thus at last there remained only three hundred men. How must Gideon have felt, whom thirty thousand did not suffice, to see them reduced to three hundred! But God strengthened him again; not by an angel, a vision, or a prophet, but by a couple of Midianites. During the night he was obliged to go to the Midianitish camp; and the Lord was condescending enough to say to him, "If thou fear to go down alone, take thy servant with thee." And lo! it happened that one Midianite was just relating his dream to another, who interpreted it to him, saying, that God had given the Midianites into Gideon's hand, with the whole host. When Gideon heard this, he worshipped, was full of confidence, and said to the host of Israel, "Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian," which actually occurred in a wonderful manner.

Let us now return to the wilderness, and see the snare which Balaam laid for Israel by Midian, and how God avenged it.

NUMB. xxv. 1—9; xxxi. 1—13.

“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

“And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

“And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

“And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men, that were joined unto Baal-peor.

“And behold, one of the children of Israel came, and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

“And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand.

“And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

“And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.”

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

“Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

“And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian.

“Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.

“So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

“ And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

“ And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses ; and they slew all the males.

“ And they slew the kings of Midian, besides the rest of them that were slain, namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian ; Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

“ And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.

“ And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

“ And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

“ And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp of the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

“ And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.”

I pass over the last prophecy of Balaam, because I do not possess the requisite knowledge to point out its fulfilment, much less what part of it remains to be fulfilled, respecting which Balaam exclaims, “ Alas, who shall live when God doeth this ! ”

This impious man would gladly have cursed Israel, but was compelled, against his will, to bless it. His wicked heart, however, invented a devilish stratagem, the accomplishment and result of which is here stated, and hoped by its means to attain the end which it had been impossible for him to do with his execrations, and in which he succeeded, so to speak, but too well.

Balaam's accursed counsel was, that Balak should tempt Israel to idolatry, with which fornication and uncleanness were connected, and which, therefore, furnished a dangerous allurements. The Midianitish women acted a chief part in it. Such was formerly, and is to this day, the nature of idolatrous worship amongst the heathen, where licentiousness is made into a religious rite by the wickedness of Satan. And what a blessing it is, that by the introduction of Christianity, this abomination has been entirely expelled, respecting which it is probable that it would find adherents enough, since it justifies vice, and even makes it an object of worship, and even in the present day a certain modern philosophy, which emanates from those who all themselves Christians, has been censured for something of the sort. We see also from this, what the spirit of the times has in view. It is not enough for mankind to do evil with impunity and without excuse, they even desire that it should be justified, and require no forgiveness of their sins.

The abominable counsel, which Balaam gave, and hell suggested, produced a lamentable effect; for the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of the Moabites, who invited them to sacrifice to their gods. And the people ate, and worshipped their gods. The very circumstance of eating things sacrificed to idols, was a very dangerous thing, for they came, by so doing, into a pernicious fellowship with devils. In this their ungodliness, they manifested a revolting effrontery towards Moses himself and the whole congregation, to whom they boldly bid defiance, by shamelessly practising their licentiousness before their eyes.

But there was one, who did not suffer himself to

be defied, and that was God. His anger was kindled against Israel, and punishment followed upon their impiety. It commenced with the rulers of the people. They were hung up, and thus the curse of the law was outwardly executed upon them. The judges were enjoined to slay all those who had joined themselves to the filthy idols; and the ruler, who had manifested the greatest audacity in his vice, was slain by Phinehas the high priest himself, who seized a javelin, and pierced him through with it. The Midianitish princess, the chief fomentress of the whole offence, shared in his fate. Twenty-four thousand were slain on the whole; but the rest of the congregation lay before the door of the tabernacle, weeping and humbling themselves before God, although they had not sinned in like manner, whilst those who had acted so, impiously defied them and mocked at them. God, however, manifested his holiness and justice in the punishment which befell them, by which so great a number of men suffered a violent death for their crimes, without longer space being given them for repentance. For when the wrath of the Lord once awakes, there is no escape.

But Paul says, (1 Cor. x. 11,) "Now all these things happened unto them for examples; therefore be ye not idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." Fornication and lewdness of every kind is a vice which is particularly abominable and accursed of God. It is considered as a defiling of the temple of God, and he who does so, is threatened with destruction from God. Whoremongers and adul-

terers, in particular, are represented as those whom God will judge, though a human tribunal may not. Hence these sins are attended by a most horrible disease, so that perpetrators of them consume away, whilst still in the body, and resemble a most disgusting carcase. However, it is a very prevalent vice, particularly in this licentious period; a vice which is scarcely regarded as a sin, and is made a jest of, to which individuals are incited in all manner of ways, and to which the slightest obstruction is not offered by the magistracy. On the contrary, houses of ill fame are tolerated, and shameless and impudent females are permitted to infest the streets, and ensnare whoever they are able. Where is there now a Phinehas to be found, to pierce them through? How much occasion would present itself to such a one, even, alas! in our own vicinity! O God! attempts are making to convert the heathen, and they are laudable; yet christian countries are sinking more and more into heathenish blindness and vice. But those will eventually not escape punishment, who refuse to repent, and even mock at it. These are the ways to hell, which go down to the chambers of death. Away, therefore, with all the frivolity, which is so suited to the spirit of the times; with all lasciviousness in words, works, and deportment: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." "Seeing, therefore, that we have such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God."

It is remarkable that the Apostle, before mentioning fornication, says, "They sat down to eat and drink,

and rose up to play." The one is connected with the other. Here mention is only made of play; to which belong banquetings and revellings, which are a whoredom of the tongue, as well as an incitement to excesses of every kind. And what other spirit is it which reigns in all amusements, whatever name they may bear, but a worldly and whorish spirit? It is well known how universally, and with what zeal the world defends its sensual gratifications. It strives for them as if they were sinless, and allowable pleasures. It censures and even reproves every religious view as erroneous and dangerous, which militates against this sentiment. It exclaims against it as conducive to melancholy, as rendering people gloomy, and causing them to spend their days in sighing and groaning, which cannot please God, who is pleased at seeing us happy. Thus dancing and gaming, the theatre, and whatever other names their amusements may bear, together with the more low-lived drinking haunts, with their riotous consequences, are regarded by the blind world as allowable things, of which it will not suffer itself to be deprived. But it is the same spirit of whoredom which reigns in all these things as in the idolatrous worship of Baal-peor; they are fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ungodliness and worldly lusts, and he who is under grace, is taught by it to deny them. Though it cannot be said, that he who abstains from these things is already in Christ; but every true Christian will do so, even though he be ridiculed for it. But woe to the earthly minded! If their belly is their God, their damnation is sure.

There is also a spiritual whoredom, which is not less sinful. Idolaters, amongst the Israelites, are frequently

called by the prophets whoremongers and adulterers, because, by the practice of idolatry, they fell away from God their husband, and gave themselves up to lying idols. Such spiritual whoredom is not now so common, as that of which Christ says, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart;" but it is also spiritual whoredom and adultery, when we invent to ourselves something, or possess any thing, in which we wholly or partially place our confidence, whether they are earthly or spiritual things, out of us, or in us, or natural intellectual gifts, or gifts of grace. And who is there that is not ensnared in this subtle but abominable idolatry, or is entirely divested of all self-love, self-exaltation, self-conceit, and presumption! Alas! he who thinks he is something, whilst in reality he is nothing, deceives himself. This is a poison, which only few know and perceive; this is a fly, which corrupts the whole ointment. Art thou desirous of boasting of thyself, let Paul be a pattern to thee, who boasted rather of his infirmities than of his sublime revelations and advantages, who called himself nothing, and confessed, saying, "Not I, but the grace that is in me?" Canst thou believe, love, and hope; canst thou be bold and courageous; canst thou act very devoutly, suffer very patiently, and die very joyfully? it is the Lord who enables thee. If it were not so, thou wouldst experience the reverse of all this within thee. Therefore, trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord God is an immutable rock.

Spiritual whoredom is, further, when the doctrines of salvation are abused and perverted, so that men become thereby presumptuous instead of humble, walk

carelessly instead of circumspectly, as foolish and not as wise, perverting the valuable blessing of gospel liberty into a cloak of wickedness; whilst saving grace, on the contrary, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, producing the very contrary of all this, and strengthening us for the performance of every good work; hence Paul, writing to Timothy, says, "Be strong, my son, in the grace that is given thee."

To this sin belongs, also, in particular, the intermingling of the law and the gospel, in which neither remain what they really are; of free-will with grace, in which neither the one nor the other is predominant, and where things are not according to the passage, "If it be of grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Such people seek a middle path in spiritual things; so that salvation shall not be entirely of grace, but our own diligence and efforts must be added to it, so that it does not depend entirely upon our own efforts and diligence, but the co-operation of God is necessary, which must be sedulously intreated. This is the entire christian wisdom of the majority. Further than this their understanding does not reach. They see men as trees walking. What is beyond this is incomprehensible, and even offensive to them; they stumble at it, oppose it, and even blaspheme it. In our natural state we are ignorant of the things of the Spirit of God. If the carnal mind is to be judge in spiritual things, we well know what the decision will be. It is, however, an established point, that the vital knowledge of Christ does not suffer its possessor to be unfruitful, inoperative, and inactive. It is not

words, but things; not imagination and fancy, but reality and substance. Christ himself lives in believers. They work through him, or he in and through them. Hence they labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of God gives unto them. They do not work, and yet they work; for they are not without law, but under the law to Christ. He that can receive it, let him receive it.

For the present, I will content myself with these remarks, having already, at the commencement of Balaam's history, spoken upon the subject. It may, however, be objected, that Balaam succeeded in cursing the people of God; he succeeded in exciting the divine displeasure against them, and in causing such a manifestation of it, that twenty-four thousand individuals were slain in one day. Do not, however, call this success, but correction. If you suppose that God suffers his children to act in such a manner with impunity, you are under a great mistake. If he loves any one, he acts towards him as a father, by chastising him, and, occasionally, very severely. What we read in Psalm lxxxix. 30—37, belongs, also, to the promises of the people of God. It is there said, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall

endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." It may then sometimes fare with them, as it is written in Psalm lxxx. 4—7, "O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us, again, O God of Hosts! and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

Do not we see in those who are penitently surrounding the tabernacle, and weeping, a blessed fruit of the severe correction. And through the intervention of the priest, all is again restored to order. God commanded his servant Moses, and said, "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites!" In consequence of which, he commanded the people to arm themselves, and brought a host of twelve thousand men into the field. The result you know, according to what we have read at the beginning. The nation of the Midianites was rooted out. Balaam, also, was slain. The Midianites were not, however, so entirely extirpated, as not, in time, to recover themselves again, and that, too, in such a manner, that Israel was seven whole years in their power, and horribly tormented by them; until God raised up Gideon, who delivered them in the wonderful manner we have noticed in the introduction to this discourse. Remarkable is the change in the mode of speech; for we find God saying to Moses, "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites;" but Moses himself, in speaking to the people,

says, "Avenge the Lord of Midian," that it may be made manifest, that God does not desert his people.

"Flee fornication," and all that in these licentious times may tend to it. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." But "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Amen.

XXVI.

IJE-ABARIM.

NUMB. xxi. 11.

“ And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ijim, on Mount Abarim, (Luther’s version,) in the wilderness which is before Moab, towards the sun-rising.”

“ It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,” says the Apostle, (Heb. xiii. 9.) He speaks, at the same time, of a being carried about with divers and strange doctrines, which he contrasts with the being thus established. There is, therefore, an establishment of the heart, especially in the doctrine of the gospel; and this is particularly needful in the present day. The prevailing spirit of the times will scarcely allow of any thing firm and established, but keeps every thing in doubt and uncertainty. It must not be said, that the matter is decidedly so, nor that it is certainly not so. Every one is at liberty to retain his own views, tolerate, and be tolerated. Hence arises a state of uncertainty, an universal vacillation. Is man so corrupt, that he is incapable of any thing good, or is there still something in him that is good? The answer is, we know not, but incline to the latter

opinion. What is man able to do; every thing, nothing, or something? Ignorance is again pleaded. Must every thing proceed from faith, or must men do much of themselves? Is it of grace, or of works; or, in some respects, of both? Is it merely Christ's, or merely our righteousness, or both combined? One view is received to-day, and another to-morrow, in order shortly to be exchanged again.

It is good that the heart be established. How delightful it is to hear a Job saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God;"—a David, "I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Though a thousand should fall at my side, and ten thousand at my right hand, yet it shall not come nigh me. I laid me down, and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me. Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;"—an Isaiah saying, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us;"—the church, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! for though I fall, yet I shall again arise;"—and Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

To this we attain, not by meats, which do not profit them that are occupied in them, but by grace.

In the journeys of the children of Israel, an encampment is mentioned, which, by an exhibition of the opposite, places in a clear point of view, the excellency of such a state, and will form the subject of our present meditation.

You perceive that the wanderings of the children of Israel are drawing to a close; for we have arrived at

the thirty-seventh encampment, the whole number of which is forty. This one is called Ijim, and signifies a heap. Thus the word occurs in Micah i. 6, where the Lord threatens to make Samaria as "a heap of the field," which is also mentioned in Jer. xxvi. 18. This Ijim lay on the borders of Moab, which were marked by a heap of stones, and hence the name of the district. This encampment is likewise so called, because it contained several others, such as Zared, Arnon, the well of Mathanah, Nahaliel, and Bamoth, in which the people were encamped, being separated by mountains and valleys. Hence some translate the word Ijim to mean a confused mass, because the prescribed form of a square, in which they had to form their encampment, could not here be minutely observed, and hence confusion was easily caused.

Our present meditation shall, therefore, consist of a variety of remarks on this encampment.

If the word Ijim implies a confused mass, we have reason, I think, to conclude, that such is our present position, both in a religious and political respect. The latter belongs not to the pulpit, except in so far as it may have reference and infringe upon ecclesiastical and religious affairs. Christianity incites us to ■ sincere obedience to the civil authorities, to a certain extent, even as it binds us to a decided resistance when they go beyond it. The latter occurs very rarely, and only when our rulers seek to bind us to something which is opposed to the express word, command, or prohibition of God. We should then be compelled to obey God rather than man. However, even in such a grievous case, we should never resist

the powers that be, by sedition and the force of arms, but only by entreaty and supplication, by patience, and a minute fulfilment of their other injunctions, or else either take to flight, or submit to be deprived of our property, and even of our lives, for the Lord's sake. The civil authorities possess no power whatever over our convictions and our consciences; for this belongs to God alone. But if they ventured to extend their authority over this sacred jurisdiction, they would cease, in this respect, to be the ministers of God, and appointed by him. In all other cases, it is for them to command, and for us to obey; even as they are also at liberty to tolerate, favour, or limit religious forms and confessions in their states, or otherwise. If people were really Christians, as they profess to be, there would not be such confusion, in a political sense, as at present exists. The age in which we live, furnishes a particular proof, that the people are like a raging sea, which no power can restrain within its bounds, but that Omnipotence which says to the natural sea, hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

This Ijim manifests itself evidently in the confused state of religious and ecclesiastical matters. Formerly articles and creeds were highly esteemed, and preachers were obliged on oath to preach according to them; the Lutherans according to the Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Catechism; and the Reformed according to the Heidelberg Catechism. Hence, if any one wished to know what was taught and believed in any particular church, he had only to refer to their confessions. He that was desirous of becoming a preacher, or professor, was compelled to teach according to

them, or give up his office, or else was dismissed. But how is it at present? In many places the case is so, that it is risking too much to teach the people according to them; and the preachers are of such a kind, that even Jews and Mahometans might listen to them without offence; but those who are seeking salvation are unable to derive the smallest edification from them. Still they call themselves Christians, and speak and preach what they please, except the gospel. We often meet with those whom we really take for Christians. But before we are aware, we hear them reject whole portions of the Holy Scriptures, and deny individual fundamental doctrines, which have reference to the essence of evangelical religion, so that we know not what to think or say. They make, at the same time, the strait gate so wide, that it is difficult to say how much cannot pass through it, so that Christ must be in the wrong to compare it to a needle's eye. Judging from the efforts made to disseminate the Scriptures, we should imagine that the desire for the word of God was exceedingly great. But my eyes are not sufficiently sharp-sighted to see it, and I am compelled to think of the words of Christ, when he says, "For a witness against them."

The Protestants of the present day, indeed, divide themselves into two distinct parties, the most numerous of which call themselves Rationalists; that is, such as make reason, and not the Holy Scriptures, their rule and standard; they are, therefore, heathens, and out of the pale of the christian church, although they very illegally possess and occupy the greater part of the pulpits and professors' chairs. The other party are called Supernaturalists, and believers in revelation,

and are again divided into several ramifications. Who does not find in these an Ijim, an astonishing confusion, since, beside these, there are hypocrites, who still make use of evangelical language; who preach, for instance, upon the Trinity, and speak of Jesus as the Son of God; of his ascension, and even of justification, but who attach a very different meaning to these words? Who, therefore, can deny, that we are not encamped in Ijim, though our Ijim be like that of the Israelites, in the vicinity of Canaan and of better times; and the second signification of the word, which denotes a driving away, be in a short time so fulfilled, that all error and confusion shall be dispersed like ■ mist before the Sun of Righteousness?

But the people of God may often feel themselves inwardly placed in such circumstances, as to be obliged to exclaim with the poet:—

“ Deep in the centre of the soul,
Behold, how clouds of darkness roll !
How faintly does the dawning day
Through the thick mists pursue its way !
Thou, morning-star, arise, and shine
Upon my soul with ray benign,
Until the Sun of Righteousness
With his bright beams my spirit bless,
Far off expel the shades of night,
And fill me with his heavenly light.”

If the gradually progressive work of creation contains a type of inward redemption, in both cases a variety of separations occur, by which that which preceded is separated, collected together, and regulated. Gōd divided the light from the darkness, and the waters above the firmament from those below it;

and the same process is observable in the Christian's experience. How much is to be done in most cases, before the difference between the covenant of works and that of grace, the law and the gospel, becomes apparent to the individual, and the singular juxtaposition and opposition of the flesh and spirit, the old and new man, sin and grace, in the same person becomes comprehensible, and continues so!

Upon how many enigmas do they stumble, which seem to them impossible to solve, with reference to ideas, as well as practice, advice, and experience! Let us adduce only a few such enigmas from the world of ideas. Jesus, who can never be mistaken, says to his disciples, "The way ye know;" and Thomas answers in the name of the rest, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Did Thomas, therefore, know something of which, as far as he knew, he was ignorant? What does Paul mean, when in writing to the Romans, he says, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me?" What a strange separation of himself from his own person! How can he say that he does not do that, which he actually does? How does he explain himself to be so far separate from sin, which he, nevertheless confesses, dwells within him! How is the singular language, with which he concludes the singular chapter, (Rom. vii.) to be understood, when he says, "So, then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin?" How can he represent such contrary things as joy and sorrow; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things; as being weak and strong; as being able to do nothing, and yet all things; as existing in the same person, not

in succession, but at the same time and the same moment, without the one making void the other, when he says, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich?" Does not John also speak very strangely, when he first of all says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?" and immediately afterwards, "He that is born of God sinneth not; he that committeth sin is of the devil."

These are manifestly enigmas which only the Holy Spirit can enable us to solve, and cause us to find nothing but harmony in apparent dissonance. But these and similar problematical expressions may cause an individual much trouble, and lead him to Ijim. Such is also the case with respect to practice and advice. How, for instance, can that waiting and hastening be practised at the same time, which Peter recommends? How are we to act in order to carry into effect the counsel of Christ, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you?" or that of the Apostle Paul, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do?" he who elsewhere says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth." How many and how opposite are the injunctions which are given to us, and in what perplexity a person may be consequently plunged, who would gladly be saved and sanctified, but whose heart is not yet established by grace! such a one is driven to Ijim by this variety of injunctions. One says, "Work whilst it is called to-day, the night cometh in which no man can work." "Give all diligence; resist unto blood, striving against

sin ;” and is he not in the right ? But another says, “ Cease from your own works ; in quietness shall be your strength. Why do you labour for that which satisfieth not ? By returning and rest ye shall be saved. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up on wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint.” And is not this advice also entirely scriptural ? A third most impressively enjoins fidelity upon us, without exactly informing us wherein it consists, and says, “ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” Why was every thing taken from the slothful servant, because he had not laid out his talent to usury, and had therefore gained nothing by it ? A fourth exalts the benefit of afflictions to such a height, that he pronounces them to be the best of all God’s gifts, and much better than consolations, encouragements, and assurances, since the Father of spirits chastises us that we may become partakers of his holiness ; and although no chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet afterward it worketh a peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. A fifth recommends, above all things, watching and prayer. A sixth represents love as the greatest of all, without which all else is vain, and says, “ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” Finally, faith is commended as the basis of all, and it is said, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” We are justified by faith ; our hearts are purified by faith. He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but be saved.

Who can object any thing against these seven in-

junctions? Who is not compelled, on the contrary, to confess, respecting each and all of them, that they are useful and scriptural? But is a sick man benefited simply by the number of his physicians? As long as an individual has still a life in his own hands, he wearies himself in the multitude of his ways, and arrives at Ijim. But of what use is the abundance of advice to him who is unable to put any of it into practice, and is compelled to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! give me no more counsel, since I am unable to follow it, for my strength has forsaken me, and my ability is gone?" And will not he have found all in one who has become acquainted with the child and the Son, whose name is both Counsellor and the mighty God, and cleaving to whom, he can easily do without any other counsel, since he possesses the sum of it all? But in so far as these exhortations are directed to men as such, they clearly prove how much he who does so stands in need of counsel himself.

The fourth cause which may compel the individual to erect his tent in Ijim, in the mass of confusion, is his own experience, and which it is difficult for him to make agree with itself, and harmonize with the word of God. Inward and outward experience undergoes a variety of changes, and its thermometer points at one time to warmth, and at another to cold. The generality of Christians are inclined to judge of their whole state by the standard of their feelings, which, in their opinion, changes with the latter. If all is well, they think it will always continue so, and imagine the same when the contrary is the case. At one time they believe that God is gracious to them, because they feel it; and at another they strongly doubt of it, because the pleasing

perception of it is wanting. Thus there is nothing certain in their path. What would become of them had they to pass through Job's trials, respecting whom we do not once perceive that he ever doubted of his state of grace, however dreadful were his sufferings. But whoever stood the ordeal in his own strength except the Saviour? Abraham himself was afraid of a violent death, before the promise was fulfilled to him, and sought to secure himself by improper means. But eighteen years afterwards, he manifested a faith in the power and faithfulness of God, which will continue to be an object of admiration in every succeeding age. His grandson Jacob wrestled with astonishing courage, even with God himself, and overcame; but subsequently complained, saying, "All these things are against me!" Into what a state of confusion must David have been thrown, when he said in his haste, "All men are liars. I am cast out from the presence of the Lord;" and Jeremiah, when he cursed the day of his birth, and Elijah and Jonah, when they fled, the one from Jezebel, and the other from God himself.

It is often difficult to make the paths in which the Christian is obliged to walk, harmonize with the divine promises, and the result frequently does not answer the expectations; and it is no small matter, under such circumstances, not to feel confused and discouraged. What is a weary and heavy-laden individual to think, when he comes to Jesus in accordance with his invitation, and yet is not refreshed; when he hopes for light, and beholds darkness; when the good he possessed disappears; and when, just emerging from the flood, he sinks back into it again? What is he to think, when the promise says, "They shall grow like the cedars of

Lebanon," and yet he is compelled to moan over the daily declension of his inward state. Must he not suppose that the promise has no reference to him, or that all is not right with him? And are not such considerations well fitted for producing confusion in the soul, when compelled to exclaim with David, "I mourn from distress of heart." Such encampments frequently occur.

But it is good that the heart be established, and not be carried about with every wind of doctrine or temptation, but know in whom it has believed, and that he is able to keep that which it has committed to him against that day. This, however, is effected by grace, and not by meats or any other means. For it is God who establishes us with grace, and hath sealed us, and given us the Spirit in our hearts. Israel is not like Moab, who is compared to wine which remains upon its lees, but which is poured from one cask into another, and not like a cake unturned, and therefore half burnt and half unbaked, but like one on which the fire has had its due effect on every side.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for, after he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." Amen.

XXVII.

ZARED—ARNON.

NUMB. xxi. 11—15.

“ And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Iji-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sun-rising.

“ From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared.

“ From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites ; for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

“ Wherefore it is said, in the book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon.”

MENTION is here made of encampments which do not occur in the account of the journeys of the children of Israel, prepared by Moses at the divine command, and inserted in the thirty-third chapter, because they were either too insignificant, or because the whole of the host had not encamped there, but only single divisions of it. This may remind us of the difference observable amongst the children of God, notwithstanding their unity, as well as of the lamentable divisions amongst Christians, which have their root in pride, in which the

one exalts himself above the other, and places too much confidence in the correctness of his own views. It is only in the vale of humility that true unity is to be found. And hence all Israel comes at length to encamp in Bamoth, from the heights into the valleys. At the last, when we have to pass from this world into the ocean of eternity, every one will be glad to lay hold of the only remaining plank, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

The catalogue of these encampments which are not mentioned in chap. xxxiii. is taken from a book which treats of the wars of the Lord. This book we no longer possess, any more than the book of Jasher, alluded to in Joshua x. 13. In like manner, God has not thought it proper to preserve some other books which are mentioned in the book of Kings, and particularly in 2 Chron. xxix. 29, which bore the same name, and to which they occasionally refer, but which were not extant for some centuries before Christ. All these books, as well as that of the wars of the Lord, here referred to, may have been very interesting, but God did not deem it necessary to preserve them, but gave them up to the teeth of devouring time, as also the most of what Solomon has written, particularly his natural history and his thousand and five songs. The evangelist John could likewise have written many more books, but refrained from doing so, and says, at the close of his gospel, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." In Patmos, however, he wished to write what the seven thunders had uttered, but was forbidden. But God, by his kind and

powerful providence, has preserved to us enough of the Holy Scriptures to instruct us in the way of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. O that they were only duly read and attended to ! for all “ Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Heaven and earth may pass away sooner than that one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. But dost thou understand what thou hearest and readest, and dost thou obey it ?

The children of Israel had not fared in the best manner in this region. The Moabites had basely refused them the passage through their country, which the former had entreated, and thus compelled them to make an enormous circuit. But they were now soon to be richly compensated for this, and that country to become their portion into which they were not previously permitted to set their feet. It was to be considered as a good omen that they were now encamped towards sun-rise, whilst at other times their direction was different. The same thing was to happen to them which befell their patriarch Jacob, on whom the sun also rose after the Lord had dislocated his thigh.

All things must necessarily work together for good to the children of God. Even in the kingdom of God there are useful retrograde movements, advantageous hindrances, and salutary defeats. But it is not left to us to judge what is preferable in particular cases ; we are called upon to follow the guidance of the fiery and cloudy pillar, and to let our eyes observe his ways. It tended much more to the glory of Christ, and to the strengthening of the faith of Martha and Mary, that Lazarus grew worse, died, and was raised from the

dead, than if Christ had merely restored him from his sickness, however much the two sisters might have desired it. We reasonably confess with Jehoshaphat, that we know not what to do, and with Paul, that we know not what to pray for as we ought.

Their first encampment after Ijim was at the brook or torrent of Zared. A torrent is a rapid stream, which bursts forth in spring, when the snow melts on the mountains, or heavy rains fall. Zared means brushwood, or dry twigs, particularly of the vine. Moab was a land of vineyards. Hence, when a torrent rushed down, it carried away the branches which had been cut off from the vines, and left them lying here and there in heaps. However excellent a plant the vine may be, and however precious its fruit, yet the wood is good for nothing. It cannot be used for any purpose, nor even as a nail to hang things upon. This encampment had, therefore, nothing attractive, but gave occasion to many useful reflections, which the works of God easily do, to him who contemplates and considers them, and takes pleasure therein.

The vine, in Scripture, is an emblem of the people of Israel. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," it is said in Psalm lxxx. "Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts! look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard, which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself, so will we not go back from thee." But the Lord reproves the people, even by Moses, when he speaks of them, in Deut. xxxii. 32, "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields

of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter, their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." "For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them."

These vine-branches might have reminded them of what they were in themselves, and warned them not to become like them. But they were void of understanding. Let us, therefore, attend the more carefully to what Jesus says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit will he take away, gather together, and cast into the fire. Abide in me, and I in you." God humbles us deeply. All that he is able to say of Adam and his whole posterity is contained in the words, "Dust thou art"—a lump of clay, which can make nothing of itself, but of which I can make what I please—a vessel to honour or to dishonour. Israel is particularly abased. Not their numbers, nor their piety, nor their righteousness, nor their cheerful courage, is the cause of their entering the promised land, but the oath which the Lord sware to the fathers. Outwardly they are the smallest of all people, and stiffnecked with regard to their sentiments. Had not God apprehended that his name would have been blasphemed among the heathen, he would have destroyed them. If a field of dry bones was a type of Israel to the prophet Ezekiel, here it was a valley full of twigs. Happy is he who humbles himself! he shall be exalted. The deeper the view we take of the abyss of our depravity, the more adorable will be to us the grace that rescues us from it. The more all self-confidence is rooted up, the more shall we feel our need of a Saviour. Mark, O sinner! whence it is that thou hopest to ob-

tain strength and salvation. Dost thou wish to see dry wood flowering and bearing fruit? Seek Jesus, and him alone, and from a sinner he can make a saint of thee. Thy sins shall be plunged as into the depths of the sea, so that when they are sought for, they shall never be found.

Christ represents himself also under the figure of a vine, of which believers, who are united with him, are the branches, thus together forming a whole. And of the true church it is said, in Hosea xiv. 7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return, and grow as the vine;" and Christ says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you." (John xv. 16.) But were not these branches at the same time prophets to the Israelites? For what else are the Jews, for centuries, than such dry twigs, because they rejected the light of life? May all those who tread in their steps see in their example whither their steps are leading them, to be swept away by the rapid stream of time as useless branches, collected together, and cast into the fire.

The second place of encampment was Arnon, which was also a brook, and divided Moab from the Amorites. The name of this encampment is as significant as that of the other was insignificant. Non means an abode, and Ar, light; therefore an abiding light, eternal light. A glorious name! However near together these places of encampment might be, yet their names are widely separate. How blissful, how unspeakably great, will the distinction be, when the souls of the righteous attain from faith to sight, from conflict to rest, from

self-denial to enjoyment, and when they are permitted to exchange their dreary abode in Mesech for heaven, in order there to fix their permanent habitation in the inheritance of the saints in light, an exchange of which, here below, we can only form a faint conception. However, during our pilgrimage through this vale of tears, there are Peniels, seasons in which believers are translated into the courts of heaven, and experience in their hearts a vital foretaste of eternal life; Arnons, in which they hear unutterable things, and are compelled to acknowledge, that a single hour of this kind outweighs years of heartfelt grief, because it is good to be there. These are, however, only to be considered as refreshments by the way, that the journey may afterwards be prosecuted with the greater alacrity.

In a dubious light, objects are but faintly distinguished, and men are seen as trees walking. But in a stronger light things are seen more minutely. Such is also the case in spiritual things. Many believing souls, by the mercy of God, are favoured with a divine light which expands itself over the word of God, directing and instructing them in the knowledge of the truth, and teaching them to distinguish between law and gospel, the old and new man, nature and grace, self-working and faith, and which enables them to make straight paths for their feet, and to walk steadily and regularly. No one, however, can establish us but God in Christ; he alone is unchangeable, and can make his people so.

At Arnon the face of things began to wear a more pleasing aspect with respect to Israel. They had now successfully completed the circuitous route round the land of the Moabites, who had refused them a passage,

although not without grievous sufferings and heinously offending. It was here, at Arnon, that it was said to them, "This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee;" and hence the harlot Rahab, who hid the two spies upon the roof of her house at Jericho, under the stalks of flax, said to them, "Our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you." Here, at Arnon, Israel overcame the king of Sihon, and took from him his whole land, which lay on this side of Jordan, and became the inheritance of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

In the joy of his heart at this event, some one wrote the book already mentioned, entitled, "The wars of the Lord," which gave all the glory to God. That which Moses quotes from this book is to us obscure, and torn from its connection. Perhaps in future it may become more clear; for some translate the words, "It is said," in the future tense, by "It shall be said." And what wars and victories of Jehovah still await us! Some translations, for instance the Dutch, give the meaning of the word Zupha as signifying whirlwind; others, the Red Sea, which is called Zuph. Luther does not translate it at all. The word Vaheb is left untranslated by all, and it is not known whether a person or a place is to be understood by it. In some passages it is rendered by "given;" in others, by "care or burden," where it is said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Thus prayed the Psalmist in a time of great distress, when many were the foes that assailed him. The word Vaheb has, in this case,

reference to the sighing of distressed believers. It also comprises in it an encouragement. Thus the builders of the tower of Babel exclaimed, "Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven." And thus the word Vaheb contains a pleasing echo of faith to the encouragement given them to fight and the promise of victory. When the conflict commences, then shall be verified what is written in the book of the Prophet Zechariah, "The Lord of Hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. They shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle, and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine, yea, their children shall see it and be glad, their hearts shall rejoice in the Lord. For I will redeem them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up. He that is weak among them at that time shall be as David." Therefore Vaheb, Go to! Be it a Zupha, a whirlwind, which overthrows every thing that is not firmly rooted, or even a red sea, we shall be able to pass through it, if we trust in God, who raiseth the dead, who hath delivered, still daily delivers, and will finally perfectly deliver. Our path leads to the brooks of Arnon, where everlasting light is enjoyed.

In the book above alluded to, the dwelling of Ar is mentioned, and the interpretation of this name may prove remarkable to us in a twofold respect. Ar sig-

nifies poor and naked, and incapable of bearing any thing; it may therefore serve to represent the natural state of men, or as an intimation what we ought to think of ourselves. This place is also called by Isaiah, Kir-haresh, the city of potsherds. And are not mankind in general compared to potsherds, when it is said, for instance, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." What are we else by nature but naked and bare? That which was said to the angel of the church of Laodicea, "Thou art poor, and blind, and naked," has reference to all mankind, as well as what is added, "Thou knowest it not." What else are we but fragile, worthless potsherds, which are entirely useless, in whose flesh dwelleth no good thing? And what good can possibly proceed from us, since God must work in us the will, which is the commencement of every good work?

The name Ar, signifying naked, and producing nothing, may serve us also as an intimation how we ought to think of ourselves, and what we may expect from ourselves, namely, nothing good. O blessed, peaceful poverty of spirit, which brings with it the kingdom of heaven, and all its influences and blessings! O salutary weakness, in which the strength of Christ is perfected! Who would believe it, that we cannot conquer in the kingdom of God, except when all our own strength is gone? only be wise after having become fools? and righteous, after having been deprived of all self-righteousness and the possibility of producing any? How detested and feared is this Ar! how unwillingly do we encamp there! how we strive against it! and yet without reason? Jacob's thigh must

be put out of joint before he receives the blessing, and conquers God and man. It is only the poor and the needy who experience his powerful aid. In order to be clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness, we must be previously stripped, and the more we are unclothed, the more clearly shall we see our nakedness. Then we are willing, with David, to be still more mean, and cheerfully confess, with John, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Thus minded, we proceed, according to the book of the wars of the Lord, to the springs of water; from thence to Mattanah, presents; to Nahaliel, God distributes, and from thence to Bamoth, from the heights into the vallies; and, finally, from death to life. Amen.

XXVIII.

BEER.

NUMB. xxi. 16, 17.

“ And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

“ Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well! Sing ye unto it.”

THE children of Israel, during their journey to Canaan, encouraged themselves on the occasion which forms the subject of our present consideration, by vying with each other in singing to the well of water. We only know of one such well, which is Christ. At this well the church sings joyfully and believingly, as she alone is able to do; and could she not glory in him, of whom else should she glory? The one seeks to excel the other in praising this well; and every one is taught in such a manner, as to desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified. The one commends his grace, his loving kindness, his righteousness, and his strength, in short, his all-sufficiency and excellency, still more believingly and joyfully than the other. O

beautiful song ! O that we might become ever better acquainted with its contents and its melody, and that the Lord would grant us the true voice and notes for that purpose, and bless to this end our present meditation !

We continue, on the present occasion, the consideration of the account from the book of the wars of the Lord, of which Moses furnishes us with an extract. It speaks of a well ; and in a barren waste, nothing is more precious than a spring of water ; even as the total want of water is equally as dreadful as a total want of food ; both are fatal. Hence water, in Scripture, is an emblem of the most valuable blessings, and even of the triune God himself, who calls himself the fountain of life. But its value and excellency becomes the most apparent, when we are deprived of it.

On this occasion we find the Lord had given the people a well, though at the same time we are ignorant of the circumstances of the place and time, and nothing is mentioned concerning them in the account of the journey. God had twice given them water from the rock ; the first time by means of a blow from Moses' staff, and the second time in like manner, though against the Lord's will, who commanded Moses merely to speak to the rock, instead of which he smote it. This was now the third time that God gave them water. He had previously promised to do so, and had commanded that the people should be called together. They were very joyful and full of faith, so that they sang to each other, saying, " Spring up, O well ! The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves."

They had already received greater benefits and seen wonders, without being so joyful and thankful on account of them. But this does not depend so much upon their greatness and excellence, as upon the impression they make upon the mind. "The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, but to the hungry, every bitter thing is sweet." We have here also a proof of the manifold wisdom and goodness of God, who is able to give the same thing in a variety of ways; at one time by a stroke, and at another by digging a well. He can render us happy, not only by removing a pressure, a distress, or a suffering from us; but whilst continuing it, can humble our wills, and thus comfort and delight our hearts. Hence we ought reasonably not to prescribe rules to the Lord, since he is able to help us in such a variety of ways.

God gave them water, not, however, without means, but, as formerly the hand and voice of Moses were the instruments made use of, so now the princes and nobles amongst the people with their staves. God selects and prepares the individuals through whom he accomplishes his will. Now even as it is foolish and sinful to deprive God of his glory, and not recognize him as the origin of all good, so it is also acting perversely to refuse to accommodate ourselves to his order, and disdain the means which he has appointed. But the great instrument through whom he will accomplish all things, is his Son Jesus Christ. He it is, concerning whom it was promised to Abraham, that in him should all nations be blessed; and it is through him that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He has made him both Lord and Christ, and him hath God the Father sealed. All

power, all things, all blessings, are committed to him, and deposited in his hands. All fulness dwells in him; he is the true well, and it was without reason that the Samaritan woman asked him, "Whence hast thou that living water?" and doubtingly inquired, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" for indeed he was so. He has the most precious water—water that quickens, purifies, for ever extinguishes thirst, and becomes even a well of water in him who drinks it, springing up into everlasting life. This divine spring has an abundance of water for those that are athirst. The rich and the full alone go away empty; whilst the empty are filled. They must not conclude from the emptiness which oppresses them, that it will continue; but that it will finally cease. God has fulfilled the mighty promise, I will give unto them water; and this fountain was Christ; even, as Paul says of the Rock—"That rock was Christ." We actually possess the well; that which is given us of God, is certainly given, without all doubt and without hesitation. And he has freely given unto us the well of salvation, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. "For it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Ought we not, therefore, reasonably to strengthen ourselves in the power of the Holy Ghost, and, with Abraham, to believe most firmly, and not to doubt? Have we not the two immutable things, each of which is more firm than either heaven or earth? Have we not strong consolation, and a firm anchor for our hopes, in the promise and oath of God?

He is the only well of water. All around is nothing but a barren sandy waste; although this well is of such an extent, that all who will, may approach, and from

its fulness receive grace for grace. We possess no other well, any more than Israel did. Do you expect to accomplish any thing important without him? Do you believe that you will receive any thing from any other quarter, unless given you from thence? Do you hope to become wise, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed, except through him who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? If so, you are like those wanderers in sandy deserts, who suppose they see at some distance a lake of the clearest water, but on hastening towards it, the delusive appearance retires with the same rapidity from them. But this is a well which enriches those who resort to it. Hence the Lord counsels the angel of the church at Laodicea to buy of him gold that he may be rich, and Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Ye are enriched by Jesus Christ in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that ye come behind in no gift." And John writes in the same manner, when he says, "Ye need not that any man teach you, for ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." What a plenitude of power does this well afford; so that no one who drinks of it, says, "I am weak," but rather, "I can do all things!" What a fulness of righteousness; so that such a one may ask, "Who will accuse or condemn?" What security; so that under the most horrifying circumstances, not a hair of their heads shall perish! What consolation; so that they may any moment be filled with joy unspeakable, though they may occasionally be in heaviness through manifold temptations! How beautiful is this well! It cannot be known without captivating all the powers of

the soul, and binding the individual to it with an unspeakable affection. If he be asked, "Wilt thou also go away?" He will answer, with the disciples, "Lord, to whom shall I go?"

We behold the children of Israel in a cheerful mood. We hear them joyfully singing to each other, and saying, "Spring up, O well!" The firm belief that God would give them water out of the sandy waste as he had promised, makes them joyful in the anticipation of it, before they behold it bursting forth; for it is the nature of living faith to render the heart firm and joyful, in the confidence that what God promises is as sure of fulfilment as if it were already in possession. Jesus is an universal good, and thus the joy is universal, without envy or strife. All poor sinners have an equal claim to him, or if any have the preference, it is he who is the poorest.

The happiness which we perceive with pleasure the children of Israel enjoying in the midst of the wilderness, and amongst their enemies, respecting which David says, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies," represents the happiness of a soul that loves God, and which it enjoys on finding Christ, after being compelled to reside awhile in the desert of distress and temptation. Who can describe the delight which the individual then experiences! It is visible in his features, and in his whole deportment. His mouth overflows with thanksgiving and praise; his mourning is turned into joy, and he exclaims, "Thou hast preserved my feet from falling, my eyes from tears, and my life from destruction. Thou hast forgiven me all my iniquities, thou healest all my diseases, and crownest me with loving-kindness and tender mercy."

O how blissfully does he find confirmed in his own experience, what the royal Psalmist said, in his distress, to his soul, "Thou shalt yet praise him!" How thankful is he, not only for the consolation, but even for having been in faithfulness afflicted; that though the Lord had laid a burden upon him, yet that he had helped him to bear it, and had made it an introduction to the enjoyment of peace. No sooner does the soul discover Jesus, as full of grace and truth, than all grief and care depart like mists before the sun. No sorrow can be too poignant for his precious name to be unable to dispel. We shall at length drink our fill at the river of his pleasures.

They say, concerning this well, "The princes digged it, the nobles of the people *digged* it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves." We refer this to Jesus Christ, the true fountain, to whom it may be very peculiarly applied. This word is made use of, when it is said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; mine ears hast thou *opened*." And the Apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, uses it in a more extended sense, when he says, "A body hast thou prepared me," which body is the offering by which we are sanctified. In Psalm xxii. the suffering Messiah complains, "They *pierced* my hands and my feet." This well of salvation was dug for us by painful sufferings, caused by the chief priests and rulers. Their staves, the insignia of their office and dignity, constituted them judges of the Messiah, whom they condemned to death, and sent out of the world as the most dreadful criminal.

The whole process took place in the desert, under the direction of Moses, the lawgiver. Hence the well was dug with much ceremony, and according to minute

instructions. When Moses had to bring water out of Mount Horeb by a stroke of his staff, he was also obliged to make various preparations, as well as to take some of the elders with him. And the ceremonies observed at the digging of this well, point out its importance; not so much as a well in the desert, as in consequence of its being a type of him who presents himself to us as the fountain of living waters. It seemed, indeed, as if the sufferings of Jesus rushed upon him like a wild tempest, without rule or plan, causing dreadful devastation. It was their hour and the power of darkness. Nothing orderly or designed appeared in their proceedings, but Jesus was treated like a ball which boys throw from one to another. Whoever wished it, beat him, spit upon, and reviled him, which was done sometimes by individuals, and sometimes by the multitude. But we must not regard the matter thus, nor as the wild result of savage and lawless passion; no, there was one at the head, who numbered every hair, however boisterously the people acted. Hence it is so often said, "That the Scriptures might be fulfilled;" and also, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have slain." The word signifies, primarily, the drawing lines, in order to form a figure, such as is used in mathematics; and hence it indicates the minute apportioning of the sufferings of Christ, that there should not be either too much or too little, and nothing extraneous; thus a bone of him was not broken, although on the point of being so. The ransom was minutely weighed, paid, and found correct. Let this comfort you; it is paid, Jesus has liquidated the account.

Let me also observe, that the word rendered digged, may likewise signify bought. In this sense it is used in Deuteronomy ii. 6. It also signifies preparing a meal, as was done for the Syrians, at the command of the prophet Elisha, (2 Kings vi. 23.) I need only mention these two significations of this word, in order to excite pleasing reflections within us. "We are bought with a price," and this ransom is the basis of our salvation. Christ has redeemed us from all our sins, and from the power of Satan, and has made us his own property. What a happiness to belong to him! He has no slaves, no fatigued day-labourers belonging to him, but all are children and friends. By degrees, he annihilates all foreign claims, every thing that will still hold fast and bind us, and extends his blissful dominion, more and more, over body and soul. This is done, in part, by the justifying power of his blood; for who will condemn, since Christ has died? He is near that justifieth me. Who will lay any thing to my charge? And partly, also, by its transmuting power, by which body and soul are transformed into his image. If darkness still cover the understanding, the light which shines from him will soon enlighten it, that we may know Christ, after being apprehended of him. If the heart must still complain, "I am carnal, and sold under sin; the good that I would, I do not," &c., he will strengthen both the will and the power to perform, in such a manner that it shall be able to do all things. If the conscience is like a wound, which smarts at every touch, and like an invalid who shudders at every noise, he can sooth it by the balm of his blood, and even cause the soul to have no more conscience of sin, but approach with boldness to the throne of grace.

Without having any righteousness of her own, she desires no other but that of being found in Christ, that she may possess the righteousness which is of God by faith. If sufferings oppress you, they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. If temptations, think it all joy when you fall into them. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." If chastisements, they are marks of your adoption, and God deals with you as with children. If you were without chastisement, you would be bastards and not sons. Are you forced to endure the assaults of the powers of darkness? he will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear. If the most painful thing of all befalls you—if he conceals the gracious beams of his life-giving countenance—the light shall nevertheless rise upon you, with still more pleasing radiance. And even should death overtake you, he may indeed appear as the last enemy of your weak nature, but it is still the last, and, at the same time, the greatest benefit, because, by his means, you are delivered from all sorrow and suffering.

But the way to attain to this blissful state is by true faith. And thou mayest attain to it, if thou canst believe. Art thou pleased with such a Lord? Art thou desirous of putting off the old man, which is corrupt, through the deceitful lusts, and of putting on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness? do not look at thy own inability, nor doubt through unbelief; but believe to a certainty, that what God has promised, he will also perform. There is no other way to partake of the marriage feast

which is prepared for us in the slaughtered Lamb, and which consists in the new man, in righteousness, peace, and joy, in life and good days. It is enjoyed in part here below, not only in the beatifying and overpowering feeling of the love of God, but also in the calm and more or less obvious influences and communications of the Holy Spirit, and the ability thus imparted, to understand the gospel, to pray, believe, and love; to stand in the conflict, to exercise patience, self-denial, peace, and all that belongs to a godly walk and conversation.

“ Spring up, O well !” we may, therefore, well sing to each other. Pour out thy streams upon us, O living water, in this wilderness, that it may flourish like Lebanon. “ Spring up, O well !” sang ancient Israel, and that justly, over the type; for their well was only the shadow of good things to come; but the body is Christ. He is the true well; he sheds light and life, righteousness and wisdom, peace and joy. When he thus begins to spring up, the heavens rain down righteousness. Yes, this well will spring up in us; and when it does so, it makes entirely new creatures of us; the dead live, the weak are strong, the unclean become pure, the sorrowful rejoice; for the Lord himself enters into the mansion of our hearts.

Who, therefore, would not join with Israel in singing, “ Spring up, O well ?” Who not exclaim, with Isaiah, “ Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness, let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together ?”

O that such a plentiful shower would pour itself profusely upon the whole earth, which has also the

promise of a gracious deluge, and when the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with joy, Jews and heathens will then acknowledge him. And why should not we thus cry out, who in ourselves are poor, barren, and wretched, and possessing nothing in which we can confide, but the Lord alone and his grace, and who gather when he opens his liberal hand? Pour thyself out upon us like a shower of light and life, and spring up in us as our all; that we may live no more, but thou in us, and we in thee. Spring up, eternal fountain of life! Amen.

XXIX.

MATTANAH.

NUMB. xxi. 18.

“ And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah.”

ISRAEL was still in the waste howling wilderness. But their God was with them, and he can transform the wilderness, like the human heart, into a pleasure-ground. “ Spring up, O well !” and we will also rejoice and sing. Weeping has also its season. Every day brings its sorrow. In the world we must have tribulation. “ Take up your cross daily,” says Christ ; and Paul, “ Approve thyself as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” and “ Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God ;” and in heaven it is said, “ These are they who are come out of great tribulation.” An Ar is wont to follow an Arnon, and a Mattanah an Ar. From a state of light and enjoyment, the soul is often again led into great privations, and then again is richly comforted. Please not your own selves, nor rejoice so much in the gifts, as in the giver. The latter remains, the former may be taken away.

This encampment bears the name of Mattanah ; in

English, presents, gifts. Thus it occurs in Psalm lxxviii. "Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God might dwell among them;" which the Apostle, in Ephes. v. 8, expresses in the words, "He hath given gifts unto men."

Let us consider the giver, the chief and secondary gifts, the receivers, and the particular time and places of receiving.

The rich and bountiful giver is God. If we refer back all that is good, both small and great, to their origin, as we ought, that origin is God. From him comes down not only every thing that is perfect, but also every good gift. Irrespective of him, there is nothing. No one can take to himself any thing; it must be given him from heaven. Sunshine, rain, and fruitful seasons are his gifts, as well as food and gladness; how much more, therefore, spiritual blessings. When Christ, speaking to his disciples, says, "Ye know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven," he prefaces it by saying, "To you it is given," but to the rest it is not given. When Paul says to the Philippians, "Ye not only believe in Christ, but suffer for his sake;" he does not forget to add, "To you it is given." He mentions, in 1 Cor. xii., nine different gifts, which he deduces from the same source of the Spirit; but he speaks of each as being given, and asks generally, "What hast thou, O man! that thou hast not received?"

The consideration of this is very necessary and salutary, to prevent us from exalting ourselves, from being pleased with ourselves, from supposing that we are something, and thus deceiving ourselves whilst we are nothing, and from despising others; all which things are

very displeasing to God. It contributes, also, to cheer us in the consciousness of our great and utter poverty and inability, since the rich and all-sufficient God can soon abundantly enrich us. He is able to do abundantly more than we ask or think. He is inexhaustible in his riches. Why then despond? God is not only rich, but bountiful. This consideration ought to serve to strengthen our hearts, and prevent us from being troubled about many things, and from running from one thing to another, but have our attention directed to one point, remembering that one thing is needful; and that this one is Jesus himself; that we may be perfect in one. "Our eyes wait upon thee." "I trust in thee." That which is not found in him, may be sought elsewhere in vain; and what is elsewhere fruitlessly sought, may be found in him. Let us, therefore, return from multiplicity into unity, and from being distracted by attending to many things, to simplicity. Lastly, it serves to induce us to give God the glory in all things—in small things as well as in great; for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy. If he opens his liberal hand, we gather; if he withdraws his breath, we turn to dust. We are nothing, and our lives are vanity. It is he who creates the light and makes the darkness. He brings to nought that which is, and calls into existence that which is not. He works in us both to will and to do what is well-pleasing in his sight. "From him, and through him, are all things," and hence also they are "to him." The triune God is the giver, and he alone. Place thy dependance upon him, and upon nothing else. Empty thyself, that he may fill thee. Die, that he may live in thee. Become

nothing, that he may be all in thee. Be satisfied with the sight of thy own nothingness, which is so painful to self-love; for he who shows thee thy nothingness, will also show thee his glory.

Let us, secondly, consider the principal gifts, and some of the inferior ones. The chief gifts are only two, but they are gifts which comprise in them all conceivable blessings of the most excellent kind. They are so great and excellent, their value so inestimable, their operation so astonishing, and their fruit so sweet, that one might be almost tempted to doubt, whether God were really serious in bestowing these gifts, were it not he whose promises are all yea and amen, who offers them, and who, foreseeing our doubts, swears that he is in earnest, and thus divests them of all foundation, but, at the same time, stamps them as a grievous sin. There are two gifts, by which we are become extremely rich. All our misery, sin, and punishment, are by them expelled, and all salvation, joy, and felicity, brought nigh. He that possesses these two gifts, needs and desires beside them nothing more. He that does not possess them, has nothing, though the whole world were his own.

These two gifts are incomparably better than earthly blessings, in one particular. The latter may be earnestly coveted, and yet not obtained. What would not this person give to have his health restored, and his life, or the lives of his family prolonged? What would be more welcome to that, than a handsome fortune? but in vain. Such, however, is not the case with these gifts. He that desires and seeks them, will certainly attain them; nay, he already possesses something of them, as his seeking and desiring proves.

And to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. The latter, also, are everlasting; but the former are transitory.

If we wish to contemplate these gifts more closely, we find ourselves on the shores of an ocean, the extent and depth of which, and upon a mountain, the height of which we cannot measure; or rather, in a paradise, into which no serpent can enter; where one fruit excels the other in beauty, flavour, and maturity, and of all which it is said, "Eat, O friends!"

The first gift which we place before us, and contemplate with astonishment, veneration, and reasonably with perfect confidence, is that of which it was said to the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." It is the only begotten Son of God, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "He spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all; how shall he not with him, therefore, freely give us all things?" "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Every thing here is as admirable as it is exhilarating; the gift in itself, as well as its intention and effect. What to say of the excellence and nature of this gift, I know not, so much might be said in its praise; but thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! By its bestowment, the only way is opened to attain, in spite of every hindrance, to

otherwise unattainable glory, to which there is now a very easy and convenient way, in which even the lame and the halt can run. This gift is the means by which that which is impossible is rendered possible ; that which is difficult, easy, and that which is not, is called into being. The blind are by it enabled to see, the lame to walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and to the poor the gospel is preached. With this one gift, numberless others are, at the same time, bestowed.

In order to mention a few of them ; do we require, for instance, that our unworthiness be removed, covered, and overlooked ?—here is the golden covering, by which this is effected. Do we require strength to suffer, avoid, perform, fight, and overcome ?—here is a superabundance, more than we can ever possibly need, so that thus all things are possible to us. Do we wish to be translated into that blissful state, in which all our past sins, however heinous, manifold, and numerous they may be, in which our sinfulness, which we have to combat all our lives long, and in which neither the devil nor his angels, neither men, nor any other creature, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor sword shall injure us in the least, nor even be able to disturb, much less affright us ?—we find it in this gift.

Do we need and desire that which is supremely requisite ; the being relieved from the fear of judgment ; the being permitted, as cleansed lepers, to show ourselves to the law and the priest, and to have boldness in the day of judgment, so that with our heads erect we may look for the Judge from heaven ; and, in one word, do we need and desire a righteousness which

avails before God, and clothed with which we shall be able to stand, when all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ?—It is to be found here.

Do we desire to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, and to deny ungodly lusts; do we wish to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; to be perfect in faith, hope, and love, or any other virtue and grace?—Here is the rich source of all. Would we gladly crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and cut off offensive hands and feet without intolerable pain; do we wish to enjoy strong consolation?—This is the only thing requisite. And this treasure is willing to be, not out of us, but in us, and to dwell and walk in us, so that it does not require mighty efforts, or to be sought for at a distance; for it is nigh us, even in our mouths, and in our hearts; and we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Well might Christ, therefore, say, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” If we possess it, we may say, in a very different sense to that of the angel of the church of Laodicea, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;” conscious, at the same time, that in ourselves we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. But we buy of him gold purified in the fire, that we may be rich.

But what were this gift, notwithstanding its preciousness, if our rich and heavenly Father had not connected with it the second equally precious gift, with-

out which, the one just described would not avail us? It was good for us, that Jesus went to the Father, because then he could send us the second gift, which is closely connected with, though different from the first. Without this second gift, we should be totally unacquainted with the first, even Jesus Christ; we should not care for, nor desire it; we should not pray, nor know ourselves, nor our sinfulness and misery, nor any thing else, but should continue blind and dead. The sun would shine, indeed, but eyes would be wanting to see. Wine and milk would be there, but no thirst, and no mouth. And what is this second gift? It is no less precious than the first. It has not, indeed, procured us any thing, but it communicates and appropriates to us the salvation purchased by the blood of Christ. It prepared a body for the Son of God in the womb of the virgin. It also begets him in us, and causes him to be formed in us. It clothes us with the new man, even as God once clothed Adam, with the garment he himself had prepared. It unites us with Christ, as members of his body, and as branches in the vine; imparts the knowledge of salvation in the forgiveness of sins, and all the blessings which we possess in Christ Jesus; and thus produces faith. It is one with the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Spirit. This is the wind which bloweth where it listeth; but we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This Spirit is presented to us as the fruit of the merits of Christ, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. The world can certainly not receive him, for it neither knows nor

sees him. But ye know him, for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. The Spirit is come, for Jesus is glorified. Whosoever will, therefore, let him come and take of the water of life freely. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him! Then, when this wind blows upon you, it will quicken you, and make the yoke of Jesus easy, and his burden light. It will then be easy for you to believe in him, to pray to him, to deny yourselves, to purify yourselves from all filthiness, to rejoice, to be blessed, holy, and glorious for evermore.

These are the two principal gifts; but I have also mentioned secondary ones. By this I mean, such as do not belong so much to the essence, as to the prosperity of religion, more pleasing than indispensable, the existence of which is extremely desirable, but their absence no real misfortune. Under this head I rank, for instance, the following:—Deliverance from any particular distress which pains the heart; greater victory over bosom sins; the removal of tormenting doubts, which had previously continually returned; of particular temptations, which refused to depart; and of obstructions which lay in our paths; communications of a clearer insight into divine truth; increase in the faith; more abundant and permanent comfort; the fulfilment of some particular wish; deliverance from some particular pressure; a greater and long-desired ability to appropriate the divine promises; joyfulness, courage, patience, resignation, and a variety of other estimable bestowments from

the all-sufficient treasury of divine grace, which are better than life.

A regenerate soul, though beloved by the Lord, may walk for a season in a barren wilderness; and if asked, children, have ye any meat? be obliged mournfully to reply in the negative, "We have toiled the whole night, and caught nothing." They may experience seasons, in which they are as a bottle in the smoke, although they do not forget his statutes; in which unrighteousness has the upper hand; in which the means of grace manifest little or no power upon them; and in which they walk in darkness, and have no light. But these seasons pass over in an extremely desirable manner; the Lord again opens his liberal hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing, and enlarges the heart, so that it runs in the way of his commandments. Thus, in the divine life, winter and spring, frost and heat, day and night, frequently succeed each other, and in their connection are as useful as necessary.

Having thus said a few things of the principal and secondary gifts, we have still to inquire, who are the recipients of them? To this, several answers may be given. But Jesus says, "It is to the poor that the gospel is preached;" and his mother says, "He filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich are sent empty away." Such is the doctrine of the whole of Scripture. If, in civil life, it is the poor to whom gifts are dispensed, the same is the case in the kingdom of grace. Who gives any thing to rich people? It would be almost looked upon as an insult. You, who in your delusion suppose you

possess much wisdom, strength, and virtue, or who imagine you possess even a considerable share, you are sent empty away, and at length, that shall be taken from you which you suppose you possess. You are self-deceived, and rich only in false coin, though the exterior may be pleasing. Your wisdom is folly, your strength weakness, your virtue idolatry, and a denial of Christ; and until you become fools, ungodly, and dead in your own eyes, you cannot receive any thing in a proper manner. But no one has reason to suppose that he is too far removed from God and all that is good, to be permitted to believe that he is one of those for whom this gift is intended. O no! you are meant in particular. Take and eat. Only believe, and thou shalt receive. Take freely that which is freely offered thee by him who cannot lie.

Lastly, we will still notice those particular times and places, which may impressively be denominated Mattanahs—gifts. Most believers have their particular Bochims, or vallies of tears, when it is their time to weep, wrestle, and pass through the sea of trouble. They have also their Peniels, where the sun of consolation rises upon them. Neither of these are forgotten by them, and they can minutely state the day, the hour, and the circumstances in which their mourning was turned into joy. But the real place for enjoying the fulness of these gifts, is their home above; and the real time for it will arrive when time shall be no more. Here they walk by faith, there by sight; here they know in part, there in perfection; here below the promises, there the fulfilment; here the conflict, there the repose.

But every thing proceeds from the one supreme gift, for which we offer our humble and heartfelt thanks to God ; and may he grant, that from this inexhaustible source, we may receive grace for grace, until we behold his glory, the glory of the Son of God, full of grace and truth ! Amen.

XXX

NAHALIEL.

NUMB. xxi. 19 ; DEUT. ii. 24.

“ And from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth.”

“ Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon : behold I have given into thy hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land ; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle.”

NAHALIEL is the fifth encampment of the children of Israel, which is not mentioned in the official account of their journeys, and of which there are seven in all. This name has also a pleasing signification. We know the meaning of the term El. It means God, particularly with reference to his strength, the mighty God, and is applied to Jesus Christ in Isaiah ix. 6. Nahal implies distribution, possession, inheritance. Nahaliel, God has distributed. This was as pleasing a name as it was suitable. Previously, the children of Israel had not possessed a single foot of land, nor any part of the promised inheritance. They possessed it merely by faith in the promise which God had given.

Nor did they see how they were to obtain actual possession, in consequence of the astonishing difficulties which were connected with it, and which once appeared to them so great and insurmountable, that they preferred an immediate return to Egypt, let the result be as it might.

And does not the same thing occur on the way to the heavenly Canaan? O how many have probably believed that it would be impossible for them to attain to it, however much they might strive, pray, and agonize! It even seemed to grow worse with them, and new corruptions were added to the old, so that there was ever less prospect, hope, and probability of attaining the promised rest. It has even been the case, that individuals have wished themselves back again, like the children of Israel, into their former state, in which they felt at their ease. Their sins did not then press upon them, nor the wrath of God distress them; curse and condemnation did not terrify them, nor the law alarm them. But now the law thunders in their ears, sin becomes exceeding sinful by the commandment, and condemnation terrifies them, so that they seem to be in hell. This suffering appears to be imposed upon them only for their torment, without any good resulting from it. Could they venture to hope the contrary, then they would be content. But one scruple and one difficulty succeeds another, and they are almost on the brink of despair. They are enjoined to believe, and can do nothing but doubt. They ought to pray, and are like stones. They ought to be holy, and are carnal, sold under sin. Thus they are compelled, with the Apostle, to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the

body of this death !” But what seems impracticable with men, is possible with God. Therefore become a prisoner of hope, and thou shalt at length be brought out of the pit, in which is no water, by the blood of the covenant. How many has the Lord already delivered from still more desolate and comfortless situations ; and why not thee ? The long period during which Israel had to wait, at length terminated after a pilgrimage of thirty-nine years ; and at length they encamped in Nahaliel, “ the mighty God hath distributed.”

For it was here where that was said to Moses and the whole congregation, which we find written in Deuteronomy ii. 24, 25, “ Rise up and take possession. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of thee.” In consequence of this, they deprived the kings of Heshbon and Bashan of their lands, which lay on this side Jordan, and which became the inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. Here the Lord indeed showed himself as the mighty God, who is not only strong himself, but can also strengthen his people. Moses was already accustomed to the Lord’s manner of speaking, and understood him well. When it was said, “ Begin to take possession,” it sounded like a command, the accomplishment of which was pleasant, though at the same time extremely difficult. But Moses knew God, not merely as one who says, but also performs, who is mighty in counsel and wonderful in working. Forty years before, God had commanded him to bring up Israel out of Egypt. At that time he

made many objections on account of his inability, and even said at last, "Send whom thou wilt send." Afterwards he did not calculate so much upon his own insufficiency, as upon the power of God. Therefore, when he told him to divide the Red Sea, he did not cry out, like that king of Israel to whom the Syrian monarch sent the leprous Naaman to be healed of his leprosy, and who said, "Am I a god, to kill and to make alive?" Moses did not act thus, but confidently stretched out his rod over the sea and divided it. So likewise in the present case. The Lord said, "Begin to take possession," and Moses was full of courage and confidence, because he trusted not in himself, but in the mighty God, who performs what he says.

The divine commands which are given us, are many and various. The fulfilment of them is, in some respects, pleasing, as for instance, the command to love, which is so sweet; the command to divest ourselves of care, to rejoice evermore, to trust firmly in the Lord, &c. ; and in other respects painful and difficult, so that Christ represents it under the figure of cutting off the hand or foot, and the plucking out of an eye. Who will not admit of their necessity, and be obliged to confess that we must repent, be converted, believe in Jesus, and follow after holiness, if we desire to be saved? Who will deny that the Holy Scriptures declare our entire inability to perform this, when, for instance, it says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" or, "If ye then are unable to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" What therefore remains for us to do? Reject the commandments? That must not be. Fulfil them of ourselves? No; but act like

Moses, when he was told to begin to take possession, and to divide the sea. Never allow that we are unable, but say with the disciples, "We are able." And is not this boasting well-grounded? What can be impracticable or impossible for us, if we believe; and how should not he be able to do all things, whom Christ strengthens? In the degree in which we are in Christ, we are not weak, but strong. He gives us strength for all that he commands to be done and suffered.

What a pleasing command, "Begin to possess, and contend with him in battle," connected with the promise, "This day will *I* begin." This day! Every thing has its time, and every undertaking under heaven its season. "My time is not yet come," said Jesus to his mother at Cana, when she drew his attention to a deficiency which had arisen. Not long after he said, "Draw out now," which command, at the same time, changed the water which had been fetched, into the most costly wine, and removed every difficulty. As pleasing as the aid may be, the previous distress may have risen to a pitch which threatens destruction to every thing. How long was it before Israel was permitted to leave the wilderness! They had now wandered about for nearly forty years. The difficulties had not diminished, but increased; the men of war were all dead, as the Lord had sworn. A war now commenced with kings, one of whom was a monstrous giant, whose enormous bed was preserved as a memorial. And now it is said, "Begin to possess, and contend in battle." If El, the mighty God, had not said it, it might have been regarded as a bitter mockery.

The people and church of God, both collectively and individually, have only to wait the appointed time,

and every thing will terminate more gloriously than was expected. They may be brought very low, every thing may seem to be on the decline, and they may sit in darkness; but they shall again arise, and the darkness become day. Therefore strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Here, at Nahaliel, it was only said, "Begin to possess," and they were at the same time commanded to fight. It was not Canaan itself, but lay on this side Jordan, over which it behoved them to pass. Manasseh, however, had his lot assigned him on both sides of the river. And such is also the case with true believers. Here they exercise faith; there they are put into actual possession. The believer's commencement of taking real possession is at his dying hour. He is then permitted for ever to lay aside, with his vile body, his travelling implements and armour, his privations and inconveniences. Every thing that stood in his way, whether of a hostile, restraining, or oppressive nature, departs and disappears for ever. It is said to him, as to the children of Israel at the Red Sea, concerning the Egyptians, "Thou shalt see them again no more for ever." His worst enemy, whom, against his will, he was obliged to drag about with him, his corrupt nature, now receives its death-blow. The sin which hitherto adhered to the soul, and checked its flights, separates itself entirely from the new man, which now fully develops itself, and enlarges itself to the fulness of the divine stature, and is glorified in this supreme beauty, destined for it from everlasting, purchased by Christ, and imparted by the Holy Spirit; so that the soul is transformed into the glorious image of the fairest of the children of men. Stubborn unbelief, which pre-

viously so often came in the way of faith, and never suffered it to reach perfection, departs, and the pure gold of faith sinks with nameless delight into the crystalline stream of love which flows from the throne of the Lamb. The wings of the soul stretch themselves and soar aloft. The gloomy clouds disappear before the face of the sun of life, and the strengthened eagle-eye now beholds it without a veil, and basks in the beams of its raptures. The narrow heart becomes wide as the sand on the sea shore, and feels expanded and acted upon by a fulness of love, which unites it entirely with its beloved Jesus and his church. The forehead becomes smooth, and every furrow which grief, pain, sorrow, and care, things now entirely unknown, had drawn in it, disappears. The pilgrim, called home to his father's house, breathes with wondrous pleasure and freedom, in the atmosphere of the new heaven and the new earth, inhales life and strength, and breathes God, his true element. Then, indeed, it is said with full emphasis, Begin to possess, enter into the joy of thy Lord! This, however, has reference only to the soul. But ah, what will its feelings be! If a foretaste of eternal life, even here below, is sufficient to make the soul almost beside itself, what will it be when faith obtains power confidently to appropriate to itself the whole fulness of salvation in Christ Jesus, when the new man rules, and the adversary lies at our feet! Such a day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand. What will it be when the whole of our earthly misery is for ever left behind us, and nothing lies before us but a rapturous eternity of thanksgiving and praise!

The complete possession very soon follows, when the

soul, at the last day, by the all-powerful voice of Jesus Christ, regains its body in a glorified form, in eternal freshness, beauty, and youth, with every suitable quality for the Lord's service, and divested of all imperfection—a convenient instrument for the glory of God. We shall then be for ever with the Lord. Paradise, our abode, shall be as glorious as the omnipotence of love alone could prepare it, and as accords with the preciousness of the price which was paid for it by the blood of Jesus Christ. What glorious company will be there, a company in which the most cordial confidence, the most fervent esteem, the greatest unanimity, and the most sincere affection, will prevail, and each one love the other as himself, and all love him supremely who hath loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood, in whom they previously believed, although they saw him not, but now see him as he is.

How delightful will be the intercourse there; how valuable the acquaintance which will then be made; what lovely intelligence will there be communicated! The understanding will perfectly know God; he will be perfectly one with him in love, and the conscience perfectly happy in the enjoyment of him; and what a new wonder!—all these glories, of which we speak only like stammering children—this eternal life, is a gift of God in Christ Jesus, from mere grace, without any merit. O that we would only receive it as such!

What a glorious aim! O that our eyes were enlightened to know the hope of our calling, how gladly would we then endure the difficulties of the way that leads us thither! It begins here below in self-condemnation, self-rejection, and in the despairing of our-

selves. But whilst stripping us of all that is our own, it gives us in return every thing again a thousand fold, for it leads us to Nahaliel.

Nahal means to possess and inherit. Nahali El means, therefore, God possesses me, and, I possess God. The one is as excellent as the other. What can be more glorious and excellent than when a soul is able to say, "God possesses me!" What can be more happy than that people who are the Lord's portion, and the lot of his inheritance, of whom he says, "I have called thee by thy name!" "Thy Maker is thy husband," or possesses thee. These are they of whom Jesus says, "Thine they were, O Father! and thou gavest them me." O happy are the men of whom it is said, "Ye are Christ's; ye belong to Christ; ye are bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God. He who hath delivered you doth and will deliver." What more genuine and constant consolation can there be than this, that I belong, with body and soul, not to myself, but to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; for to whom should we belong but to Christ, and who ought to possess us but he? Sin possesses us in order to reign in our mortal bodies, that we may yield obedience to its lusts with an accusing and condemning conscience, or else we are entirely dead in it, foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures. It is a law in our members which takes us captive; at the same time it condemns us by the law, which, so far from aiding us by its requirements and threatenings, excites, on the contrary, to sin, and makes us exceeding sinful. But if we come into Christ's possession, he cleanses our consciences with his blood, and comforts and refreshes us

with the sweet consolation of the forgiveness of all our sins, and with this balm of life heals our burning wounds; whilst, at the same time, he deposits a seed in the heart, which does not and cannot sin, because it is born of God; imparts his grace to us, which teaches us to deny all ungodliness; sheds abroad his love by the Holy Spirit, who pleasingly and powerfully impels us; yea, he takes possession of us, in order to dwell in us.

What possesses us before him? Alas! we ourselves. We stand and fall for our own account. We lie alone, how should we be warm? We walk alone; if we fall, who shall lift us up? It is said to us, "See thou to that." Take care of thyself. If thou art brought up to judgment, there is no intercessor; if in distress and conflict, there is no assistance; in anxiety and terror, no consolation. But if Jesus possess thee, thou hast a good Shepherd, who will not let thee want; one who careth for thy soul, one who comforts thee as a mother comforts her child, and who bears and carries thee.

Who possesses us as long as the mighty God himself does not? Alas, the devil himself! His servants we are to whom we obey. He possesses us in consequence of the right of conquest, and carries on his work in us, after having caused our nature to fall. As a strong man armed he keeps his palace, and certainly no one would escape him, if a stronger than he did not come upon him and take away his spoil. What a blessing, that Jesus has redeemed us from the power of the devil; and what felicity can be greater than that of becoming a habitation of God through the Spirit. O lose thy own life, that Christ may be thy life! Lose

thyself, that thou mayest find him. Be a free man, and become the possession of Jesus Christ.

Nahaliel. If the Lord possesses thee, how easy will the exercise of godliness be, which is otherwise so difficult, and even impracticable! Thou canst not do otherwise than pray, believe, hope, love, be meek and lowly; thou canst not do otherwise than rejoice evermore, because thou art strong in the Lord. If the Lord possesses thee, he will never abandon the property he has so dearly purchased, nor leave it until he has redeemed it from all evil, and brought it safely to his heavenly kingdom. O thrice happy people who are encamped in Nahaliel! Who has any right to thee? None but Jesus, who has bought thee with a price, and whose thou art. "Then shall one say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

But Nahaliel also implies, "I possess God." It might be said that such an expression was much too great and high for a saint, let alone for a sinner, in whose flesh dwelleth no good thing. But does not Jesus put it into the mouths of us poor sinners, at the very commencement of every prayer, when he does not merely permit us occasionally, but commands us always, and under all circumstances, to address God as our Father? Do we not speak thus in his name and stead, we who are in Christ Jesus? Has he not reconciled us? Is not God our friend and our lover, and has he not taken our part?—nay, is he not become our God? Certainly, this is such a treasure, and such riches, that Asaph exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire

besides thee." And is not God rich enough to bestow such treasures upon me as shall render me inexhaustibly rich? Is it not the nature of faith to pronounce the appropriating *mine* with all confidence, and firmly to believe that if God has not withheld his own Son, he will also with him bestow all his treasures and blessings? And what a blessing is such a confident assurance, which is nevertheless attainable, because it is not of us, but the gift of God. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. He is the strength of my life, my fortress, my defence, my God, in whom I trust.

Therefore, what is meant by the words, My God? Who can comprehend what they comprise! Without him we can do nothing, with him all things. He is my wisdom; how can I be wiser, even though I know nothing? He is my righteousness, how can I be more righteous; my strength, how can I be stronger, although I am so weak that I cannot stand a moment? He is my riches in the midst of my utter necessity. If I require armour, shield, and sword, or whatever it be, instead of them all, I have ONE, God alone, the child in the manger, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God."

O thou hearer of prayer! O thou confidence of the ends of the earth, and of them that are far off upon the sea. O Nahaliel, Nahaliel, thou precious encampment of Israel! My God possesses me, I possess God! Annihilated be all my own wisdom, righteousness, and worthiness! Annihilated be every thing that is, that he may be all in all. Amen.

XXXI.

BAMOTH-HAGI.

NUMB. xxi. 19, 20.

“ And from Nahaliel to Bamoth, and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.”

ON the present occasion we close the consideration of the seven encampments which are not mentioned in the official account of the journeys of Israel, and of which nothing more than the name is known to us. Important events now occur in rapid succession. The taking possession, and going forth to war commences. We are approaching Jordan and the promised land. The Lord be present in the midst of us with his grace and peace!

These are the two last stations which lie out of the regular succession. The one of these is called Bamoth, the other Hagi, implying, from the heights into the vallies. Both agree very well together. We descend from the hills into the vallies, and ascend from the vallies to the heights. “ He that exalteth himself shall

be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Let us contemplate these two places of encampment a little more closely. The one is called Bamoth. This word may bear to be translated, first, "death comes," which expression contains a certain truth—a terrific and consolatory truth—and an important truth, worthy of being taken to heart.

Ba-moth—death comes. What awaits us with greater certainty than the approach of death? The time when, and the manner how it will come, is alone unknown to us, although we know that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. Death most frequently happens in the period of infancy, and the greater number leave this world before they become conscious of having entered it. With increasing years, mortality becomes less frequent, but death seldom spares its prey long, and a long life is only a long expectation of death. It acts arbitrarily, and often pitilessly and cruelly. If we were permitted to regulate its march, we should frequently direct it to very different victims than those it carries off, for it does not act according to rule. It passes by one in order to break in upon another, and thus increases the misery of the world. It appears, generally speaking, only as a punishment, and he who would attempt, by reason, to make it agree with the goodness of God, would labour in vain at the solution of a problem that is too difficult for him, and feel compelled to confess, that God is either not so kind as some describe him, or else, since he is omnipotent, he ought to have made some different arrangement with reference to dying. Why does one man drag on an useless existence, a torment to himself and

others, and even without the use of his reason, from one year to another; whilst the valuable and important life of another is early and untimely cut short? Tell me, if thou art wise. Its coming is generally dreadful and wearisome, and its preparations more severe than itself; its delay is like a protracted martyrdom; whilst, at times, it suddenly steps in without announcing its approach, and thereby increases its terrors. Sometimes it arms itself with some terrible epidemic, as of late, in many districts; and though this may not be the case with respect to us, yet it will certainly come, and come to all.

Death comes. This is a dreadful, and at the same time a consolatory truth. Let us connect both together, and confess that it is both dreadful and consolatory. Though nature may struggle against its dissolution, and, with Paul, prefer being clothed upon to being unclothed, yet circumstances may occur which are able to render the approach of death pleasing, as the end of intolerable sufferings, so that it may be welcomed as a desirable release.

However, it is necessary to be a true Christian, in order that death may not be dreadful, but pleasing; the individual must also possess a measure of divine light, a good conscience, and strong faith. How dreadful is death to him who is no true Christian, who is not heavenly, but earthly, and the more terrible, the more pleasing the circumstances are in which, by the forbearance of God, he has lived here below. Torn away from all his connections; hurled, against his will, into another world, of which he is ignorant, which he does not desire, where he has no friend, nothing that is good, nor knows of any—how deplorable! Then

placed before a severe tribunal, called to account for every work, word, and even thought, without possessing a righteousness that avails before God, and, finally, condemned and sent to hell—what can be more horrible! What, on the contrary, can be more glorious than to die as a true Christian? He who believes in Christ, does not really die; and that faith which justifies, and by which the heart is purified, is also powerful enough to redeem the soul from all the fear of death, and fill it with a desire to depart and to be with Christ. Death to him is nothing but gain. At death, the body of sin and death receives its mortal blow—that body which so often compelled the individual to exclaim, “O wretched man that I am!” Satan, with all his temptations, discharges his last arrow. The storms of affliction pierce for the last time. He dies. But now the golden gates of Jerusalem unfold themselves to his astonished eyes. Company the most affectionate comes to meet him with rejoicing and congratulation, and he now sees Him in particular in whom he here believed without seeing. Joy and delight take possession of him, in order to remain for ever on his head. The dumb tongue now truly breaks forth into praise, and the lame foot leaps like the hart, although he was not unacquainted with it, even whilst here below, where the powers of the world to come often refreshed him. He now shines in the purple robe of the righteousness of Christ, and begins the everlasting song, “Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and thanksgiving, and praise!”

O happy Bamoth! The Jews were not so entirely in the wrong in observing, that when the word, which

signifies death in their language, is read backwards, it indicates perfection. Let us believe in Jesus Christ, and then we shall never die; and though it may appear so, yet death, in the fellowship of Christ, is nothing else than a dying to sin and an entrance into eternal life. And if it be an enemy, yet it is the last, and shall be destroyed. If we wish to give due honour to the Prince of Life, we must believingly confess that there is no more sin, nor death, and nothing but the fellowship of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

But Bamoth in reality means heights, in the plural; and Bamah, the height, in the singular number. Those places, in particular, were called heights, where idolatry was practised, which was generally in groves upon the hills. The prophet Ezekiel, in chap. xx. 29, secretly plays, as it were, with this word, by reversing it, and making two words of it, Mah-ba, that is, "Who is coming to you?" God chose a certain place for himself amongst the people of Israel; first, Shiloh, and afterwards, Jerusalem; where he would alone be worshipped; and hence believers so often longed after the temple as the place where they might expect blissful communications from the Lord, which they also frequently enjoyed. Now the prophet asks, "Mah-ba," who comes to you, Bamah, upon your high places, at your false worship? Ye come and go empty away, at least with respect to your spirits, although you may there meet with a satisfaction for your carnal lusts. I do not come thither. Ye do not enjoy me there, nor taste and see that I am good. And of how many things may not the same question be asked, Mah-ba, who comes there to you? You say, that

what you are engaged in is not sinful, but allowable. But who is it that comes to you? God and his angels, to bless you; or the devil and men, to tempt you? Really, in this question, we have a powerful admonition. Who comes? The end comes, death comes, the devil comes, having great wrath; the last day, the judgment comes, the Lord comes, and who can tell what may not befall thee and me! What manner of persons ought ye to be, therefore, in all holy conversation and godliness, being diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Act in such a manner, that when the question is put, "Who is coming?" you may be able to answer, the Lord and his grace.

Bamah means heights. There are dangerous, as well as glorious heights. Dangerous are the heights to which self-confidence and Satan lead, and where we become self-conceited and proud. Man stands, by nature on a dangerous height, from whence he must descend; for he only who humbles himself shall be exalted. He regards himself as wise, and is, therefore, incapable of instruction; he boasts of his good heart, and therefore believes he needs no atonement; he thinks himself strong and upright, and therefore does not believe in Jesus, and consequently perishes. There are also dangerous spiritual heights, on which many seemingly pious stand, and to which many true Christians are tempted. The former thank God that they are not as other men, look upon themselves as righteous, and despise others; see the mote in their brother's eye, unconscious of the beam in their own. But true Christians may be also decoyed to such heights, and manifest ■ somewhat similar

spirit. David was there, when he said, in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved;" and Peter, when he thought he was strong enough, and had sufficient love to Jesus, even to die with him. Paul was in danger of being thus exalted above measure, in consequence of the greatness of the revelation; and we find the disciples even quarrelling amongst themselves, which was the greatest amongst them. It is a temptation by which we are easily assailed, though it be of such a dangerous nature, to boast of that which we have received, as if we had not received it; and expose our views and experience to view, not that the Lord, but that ourselves and our piety may be honoured and esteemed, which is something devilish, and would cause our fall, if the Lord did not prevent it.

But it is something very different when David says, "God girdeth me with strength, and setteth me upon my high places;" and when the promise is experienced, "Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." The disciples were on such a glorious height, both as to body and soul, when they were with Jesus on the holy mount; and Paul, when he wrote the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. The soul is then firmly assured of the solidity of the covenant of grace, and its state of grace, and is able to say with the Apostle, "Who will lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

The other place of encampment is called Hagi. It is translated in our version, but if the latter, why not the former also, yea, all of them? But it is correctly rendered, and Bamoth-Hagi means from the heights into the valley. This expression contains, therefore, a maxim of the divine guidance; in accordance with which, we descend from the heights into the vallies, namely, the valley of humility.

Nothing is so displeasing to God, as the haughtiness of the children of men, and nothing so pleasing to him as humility. Thus the Lord said unto Saul, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?" And Solomon observes, that "Pride cometh before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Hence all must be humbled. No individual escapes, be he who he may. For how can a man be humbled more than when he dies? There he lies, helpless, and must submit, whether a king or a slave, merely with this difference, that death robs him of the most who possesses the most; the king of his crown and kingdom, the slave of his chain. It reduces men to less than stocks and stones, to that which is the most disgusting under the sun, and which is, therefore, put out of sight, and buried. There is no longer any difference between the wise and the foolish, the beautiful and the deformed; and hence Solomon says with reason, "That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity." Is not this an amazing humiliation for the well-formed, sensible, and enterprising individual, who generally thinks so highly of himself? He must also come down and descend into the valley.

Humiliation may be the consequence, either of wrath or grace. Woe unto him who experiences the former ! He will never rise again. He must be conscious that truth is truth, without ever being made free by it ; conscious that he is walking upon the broad and dangerous road, without being ever able to escape from it ; experience that his understanding is folly, his righteousness insufficient, his sins so great, his heart so corrupt, the wrath of God so terrible, hell so dreadful, as the word of God says, without his state being in the least improved by it ; there will then be wailing and gnashing of teeth. He will then be compelled to believe every thing, without deriving any benefit from it, though here he exclaimed, “ Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” This is dreadful ! And how horrible is the consideration, that so many walk upon this broad road ! O that their feet were timely withdrawn from it, and that they entered in at the strait gate by the narrow way that leadeth unto life ! It may well be called a low and strait gate ; so that we must become little, and bow low, in order to pass through it. And this is effected by the humiliation, which is the result of divine grace.

This humiliation is experienced, both at the outset, and during the progress of the christian course. It is produced both by the law and the gospel, as well as by the diversified guidance of God. At the commencement, when the individual is brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, the pillar of fire and of cloud leads him to Hagi ; into the valley. It often seems to him, as if his path, instead of leading him to salvation, was conducting him to destruction ; as if, whilst desiring to become pious and godly, he

had entered upon an affair which he would be unable to accomplish ; as if he had begun to build a tower, without first counting the cost, and that he will inevitably be put to shame. He is rudely awakened out of sleep. Rest is banished from him, where shall he find peace ? To whom shall he go ? who will help him ? who will lead him to life ? If he were only able to weep, pray, confess his sins aright, and to hate and avoid them ; but, alas ! he cannot. Thus wretched is the commencement in appearance, and the man becomes little, and begins to say, " I am a worm, and no man." Thus disagreeable is the descent into the valley where blessings are bestowed. But his humiliation does not end here. God takes his own time for it. When the man supposes that the rain is over, new clouds begin to arise. Each one has his portion of tears measured out, which must be wept to the full.

To this *the law* contributes with its strict demands and threatenings. From hence proceed consciousness of inward depravity, anxiety and distress, inability and helplessness. The law made Paul, formerly a self-righteous Pharisee, into such a poor sinner, that he exclaimed, " O wretched man that I am !" *The gospel* humbles us in a very pleasing manner. When God says by it, to the heart rendered contrite by the conviction of sin, " I love thee, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and drawn thee to me with loving-kindness ;" when a returning prodigal, who expected nothing but reproaches, hears none, but sees his father hastening towards him, kiss him, clothe, adorn, and entertain him ; there is no end to the humiliation. The more he then becomes acquainted

with the gospel of the grace of God, the more he perceives that every thing depends on the mercy of God; the more deeply is he humbled, but, at the same time, the happier and more devoted to God.

In order, in the sequel, to be retained in the valley of humility, and kept little in their own eyes, the various paths contribute, by which the wisdom and goodness of God leads his children, whom he chastises, that they may be partakers of his holiness. Of this guidance we need not particularly speak, because it so frequently occurs in these discourses, where our path leads us from the heights into the vallies, and from the vallies to the heights, and thus to Canaan.

Be content that it should be so. If the way is tedious, the more glorious is its termination. We are travelling. Let him that will accompany us, hasten, and not delay. All is well that ends well. Amen.

XXXII.

BASHAN.

NUMB. xxi. 32—35 ; DEUT. iii. 12, 13.

“ And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there.

“ And they turned, and went up by the way of Bashan ; and Og, the king of Bashan, went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei.

“ And the Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not : for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land ; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

“ So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive, and they possessed his land.”

“ And this land which we possessed at that time from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, and half Mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and the Gadites.

“ And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh : also the region of Argob with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.”

WE have here, also, a continuance of conflict, and taking possession. If Sihon is to be regarded as a type of the devil, Bashan may be looked upon as a

type of the world with its lusts, and likewise of the New Testament economy.

The children of Israel have overcome Sihon, and been put in possession of his kingdom. They arrive at Jaazer, and are there entangled in a new war. But Jaazer means the help of God, and when he is for us, who can be against us ! All spiritual warfare must be carried on from thence, and every foe overcome with the help of God ; for without him we can do nothing. Israel, under the guidance of Moses, went forth to this war with peculiar confidence ; for the Lord had said to him, “ Fear him not ; for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land.” It is an easy matter to carry on war evangelically, for the gospel frees the soul from all fear, and gives, by means of faith, ability to every good work.

The king with whom they had to do, was called Og, a name of no importance. It signifies cakes, dainties, &c. and is connected, in Psalm xxxv. 16, with hypocritical mockers, denoting the characters alluded to by the Apostle, when he says, “ Whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame,” and upon whom he denounces damnation. Ephraim is said, in Hosea vii. 8, to be like “ a cake not turned ;” therefore half burnt, half raw, and uneatable. Such a cake is an emblem of unconverted men, upon whom no change has taken place, and also of inexperienced souls, whose gold has not yet been purified from its dross by the fire of temptation, and whom, therefore, many a change awaits, which they do not at present anticipate, imagining that they will die in their convenient nest, as Job supposed, although afterwards he was exposed to many a storm. How often was David turned ! And

Jesus says, respecting his disciples, who could not mourn so long as he the bridegroom was with them ; that when he should be taken away, it would be their turn to fast and mourn.

Og's person was of enormous dimensions, being the last of the race of giants. His iron bedstead was nine cubits long, and four broad. He is also mentioned, in Psalm cxxxv. 11, as a brilliant proof of the divine power, which was glorified in his overthrow. If Sihon, in Heshbon, was a figure of human reason and the many inventions which the natural man finds out, Og is a figure of the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, and therefore justly to be considered as a powerful giant. Who shall set him at liberty that is ensnared in this three-fold net? The Son alone can do it, and that perfectly ; on which account he says to those whom he calls forth and enables to fight against this giant, " Fear not ! " Is he not the idol whom all men serve ? If great warriors are admired for their mighty victories by which they conquer countries and possess cities ; Solomon calls those still greater, who obtain victories over themselves. Even he, notwithstanding his much admired wisdom, was overcome by this giant, and disgracefully became his slave. Did not his father suffer a miserable defeat from him, when he ascended, towards evening, the roof of the royal palace ? But Joseph, to whom Og drew near in the person of Potiphar's wife, successfully conquered him, but was obliged to suffer for it in prison, which, however, was the way to his elevation.

What else does corrupt nature seek, so long as it is a cake not turned, from infancy to old age, than the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of

life? Did not Demas, the companion of the Apostles, love and return to this present world? and Peter complains of those who, after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, were again entangled therein and overcome, whose end was worse than the beginning. What a dangerous foe, therefore, must that be, who assails such heroes! But that a Christian must attack and fight against this Og, notwithstanding his gigantic size, is plain. The tempting hand, the offending foot must be cut off, and the seducing eye be plucked out, or we are menaced with hell fire, where their worm dieth not. But as certainly as Israel, under the command of the Mediator of the Old Testament, overcame Og, so surely will those be victorious who, under the guidance of the Mediator of the New Testament, fight against the world and the flesh, with the lusts thereof; for that which is born of God, sinneth not, and faith is the victory that overcometh the world.

The land of this giant-king was called Bashan. A beautiful name, when it turns out to be reality and not a mere shadow. *Shan* means tranquil, quiet, happy, unmoved. Job employs this word, when he says, in ch. iii. 18, with reference to the grave, "There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor." Thus the Lord says, in Jer. xxx. 10, "Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob! neither be dismayed, O Israel! for lo, Jacob shall return, and be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." And in Prov. i. 33, Wisdom says, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Bashan, therefore, implies the being at rest; or, rest, satisfaction, plenitude comes;

or it may be employed as a wish, a request, "Come, O rest!" like the petition, "Thy kingdom come!" But woe to those who seek this Bashan, or suppose they find it here below! they will be dreadfully deceived, and find it neither here nor hereafter. The earthly Bashan was a delightful land on this side Jordan, and is still the most fruitful part of the otherwise desolate Palestine. It contained magnificent forests and excellent pasture land; hence the oaks and bulls of Bashan were renowned, as well as the balm of Gilead, mentioned by Jeremiah.

Bashan counted sixty cities, all with high walls and massive gates, and many more open towns and villages, which lay in a district of the kingdom called Argob, or the lion's den, where there were many lions, and the inhabitants of which were like lions. But Israel, mighty in God, overcame them all. Amongst these cities, two were particularly eminent; the one was called Edrei, the glorious city, and the other Ashtaroth, (Josh. xiii. 12,) the rich, brilliant, and superabounding city. Thus also was the idol called, whom these luxurious heathens worshipped instead of the true God, as the source of all pleasure and prosperity, and whose worship was accompanied by the most scandalous lasciviousness, to which the Israelites also frequently suffered themselves to be seduced, and, by so doing, drew down the judgments of God upon them.

The ruler of this kingdom, who was in want neither of herds, nor wine, nor corn, marched out against Israel, with his armed and gigantic people, like lions against sheep, and the Israelites, compared with them, were only like a host of grasshoppers. They were, however, compelled to fight or be devoured. There

was no other choice, although there was naturally no prospect of their obtaining the victory. King Og, who was greater than Goliath, went out against them with his host, and Moses and his people set themselves in array against them. However, they acted according to the rule which Christ lays down, when he says, "What king going to war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" They acted up to this maxim, but only by faith in the old promise, "The Lord will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." They looked not at the gigantic Og, nor his lion-like army, nor his walled cities, but at the Lord and his promise. For he had said, "Fear him not, for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land." For this purpose, the Lord granted them the believing confidence, to enable them to receive and obey what he had said. And thus nothing more is mentioned of the battle, except that "They smote him and his people, until there was none left him alive, and they possessed his land." This victory was intended to be a memento for them in future, and in every similar case, that they might carry on their wars in like manner; that is, by faith, and thus furnish us, at the same time, with an example how we, in like manner, ought to fight, and likewise overcome.

But what did the children of Israel do with the conquered and depopulated country? They took possession of it, and it became the inheritance of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh; the other half of which obtained its inheritance on the other side Jordan. This was their own

choice. They made known their wish to Moses, and said, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." This latter expression displeased Moses greatly, and he said, "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? Behold, ye are risen up in your father's stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel." But when these tribes explained their intentions more particularly, that such was by no means their wish; but that they would go ready armed before the children of Israel, until the whole of Canaan was subdued, and would only leave their wives, children, and their flocks there, he granted their request.

This circumstance gives occasion for various reflections. The majority act like Reuben and Gad; some would gladly be like Manasseh, and a few really are so, many like the eight remaining tribes, and some like the tribe of Levi, which obtained no inheritance, but whose portion was the Lord himself, which was the best of all. By far the greater part of mankind act like Reuben and Gad, and choose their inheritance on this side of Jordan, out of Canaan. They prefer earth to heaven, and concern themselves not about the latter, but only about the former. Their portion is, in this life, the beautiful country of Bashan, and its idol is the object of their adoration, attachment, and endeavours. They are not ashamed to confess that the land is convenient for cattle. But, because they are animal, bestial, and carnally-minded, they desire it on account of this very quality, which so fully accords with their sentiments. Reuben and Gad, indeed, mingle outwardly with the children of Israel and their wars; but

their hearts cleave to Bashan, to their wives, children, and flocks, which they have there; for where a person's treasure is, there is also his heart. Thus our Gadites are baptized, and baptize their children; send them also to receive religious instruction, and submit themselves, when requisite, to ecclesiastical regulations, but without heartily agreeing to them. Even in religious persecutions many individuals of this description have also exposed themselves to sufferings, however much they were inconvenienced by it, which they would scarcely do in the present day, but probably assent to every thing. That which they desire is, to live joyfully in the world, to fare sumptuously every day, to clothe themselves splendidly, and to deny themselves nothing that their eyes covet or their hearts desire. And this they do, as far as they are able, live like the brutes, and die like them. But they despise the counsel of God for their salvation, and count themselves unworthy of eternal life. They reject the invitation to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, but take care of their fields and possessions, oxen and horses, marriages and festivities. None of them will be, therefore, admitted to it; and their end will be damnation.

Some would gladly act like the tribe of Manasseh, who desired to have their inheritance, part on this side, and part on the other side Jordan, in Bashan and Canaan at the same time. They wish for a little religion, but only so much as causes them no trouble nor any particular restraint. They read devotional books; but only such as breathe these sentiments. They receive some of the doctrines of the gospel, but reject others; they agree to some of the commandments, but the weightier matters of the law—faith,

self-denial, taking up the cross and following Christ—are not for them. In their amusements, they extend the designation, “allowable,” as far as pleases themselves. Thus they imagine themselves to be superior to others in reason, discernment, and mental culture, and arrogate to themselves the most well-founded claims to the heavenly Canaan, without crossing the Jordan, and without crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, as all do who belong to Christ. But unto such it will finally be said, “I know not whence ye are. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!” Some, but not very many, act like Manasseh in the best sense. They have their inheritance on both sides the Jordan, both here and hereafter, which is partly true of all Christians. They all may exclaim, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage,” although they may not always be able to boast of it, by reason of the weakness of their faith. All things, however, must work together for good to them that love God, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

But to some it may refer in a particular sense. There are those who are forced to exclaim, with Job, “I am in terrors from my youth up;” whilst there are others who, like the Ethiopian chamberlain, go on their way rejoicing, and to whom the Lord promises never to hide his face from them. This is especially the case with those who, as a proof of the particular mercy of God, are drawn to him during the last days or weeks of their lives, who are richly comforted, and exultingly pass over the Jordan of death into the heavenly Canaan; as well as those who, in life and death, have a perfect faith afforded them, and thus

an easy yoke and a light burden. But it is with most Christians as with the majority of the tribes of Israel, who passed through much conflict into the promised land. They have daily their cross, and particular suffering. They drink deep of Christ's cup and are counted as sheep for the slaughter. But what shall separate them from the love of God? Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work out for them a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

Finally, some are like the tribe of Levi, to which no inheritance was allotted, but whose portion was the Lord. These are the poor in spirit; but the kingdom of heaven is theirs. They are those who have nothing, and yet possess all things. All their own glorying is at an end, and if desirous of glorying, they can only glory in Christ. In themselves they have no support, nor any thing in which they might place confidence, but poverty and insufficiency; nor can they take any thing themselves, but it must be given them of God. Their happiness is, that the Lord's goodness is every morning new, and that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. They are, at the same time, without care; for the Lord careth for them. They walk by faith, being assured that he will not let them want any good thing, but send them at the time what they require. These are the poor and afflicted people whom the Lord leaves for himself, that they may trust in his name; the quiet in the land, who are dead, and whose life is hid with Christ in God. But when he who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory.

We return once more to Bashan, and perceive in it

a representation of New Testament rest, and a petition that this rest may come.

Bashan, come, O rest ! Bashan, in its repose, is satiety, is the fulness of every blessing, life, and abundance ; this is a glory which supremely and exclusively belongs to the New Testament, to the gospel of Jesus, or the covenant of grace. There is no imaginable good essentially belonging to our felicity, which may not be plentifully met with here.

“ Jesu’s name, thou pearl divine !
Precious art thou still to me,
Treasure, which I choose for mine,
All I wish is found in thee ;
Grace, and power, and holiness,
Life, and rest, and blessedness.
This dear name, for ever new,
Shall my soul with joy bedew.”

Here rest is to be found, which cannot be met with in earthly things. In the law there is neither rest nor peace.

“ To thee, O God, myself I give,
For thee alone I wish to live.
The heart, no more by self oppress’d,
May rest as on a parent’s breast.
In me I nothing good can see,
I nothing am, nor seek to be ;
O thou that dost my sins remove,
Thou art my wealth, my joy, my love !”

By faith we enter into rest, when the soul, after becoming dead to the law, lives by the faith of the Son of God. Much of what is glorious may be seen, tasted, and enjoyed, even here below ; and that not merely in particular seasons, but as a permanent state.

Such individuals find, like the half-tribe of Manasseh, their Canaan, in some respects, on this side Jordan, and may say, with Paul, "Henceforth let no man trouble me. I have all and abound." God is my father, Jesus is my brother. His Spirit is the pledge of my future inheritance. Hence my privileges are greater than those of the highest seraph. Angels guard and minister unto me. My conversation is in heaven: there is my treasure and there my abiding home!

But the New Testament shall eventually reveal itself as a glorious Bashan, where abundance dwells in supreme splendour, even on earth, when the time shall be fulfilled, in which, according to Rev. xx. 6, those who have part in the first resurrection, and are priests of God and of Christ, shall reign with him a thousand years. The New Testament will then be known and understood in a much clearer light; its blessings will then be dispensed and enjoyed in a much greater measure and extent; all hindrances will then be much more completely removed, Satan bound, and every adversary quelled in a greater degree than has ever been the case, even during the times of the Apostles.

Why should we not, therefore, make Ba-shan into a fervent petition and supplication, and say, "Come, O rest!" Come, O satiety of joy! Come, O season of refreshing, from the presence of the Lord, when every thing shall be restored which the Lord hath spoken by the mouth of all his prophets since the world began!

Children will then be born to him as dew from the womb of the morning, and the nations which, until that period, had continued in their heathenism, will fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows; and upon

Israel will then be poured out the Spirit of grace and supplication. They will come with weeping and supplication, and the Lord shall lead them.

O may thy kingdom come, the promised rest draw near! "When the Lord shall turn again the captivity of Zion and redeem his people, then shall our mouth be filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then shall they say amongst the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Amen.

XXXIII.

THE DIVIDERS OF CANAAN.

WE have recently terminated the consideration of an extremely remarkable section in the history of the wanderings of Israel through the desert to Canaan. This was the affair with the false prophet Balaam, an extremely significant occurrence, an event which will be again repeated, and that ere long. A severe temptation which befell the children of Israel, and that too the last, shortly before their passage over the Jordan, and their introduction into the possession of the promised land. Balaam has been smitten with the enemies of God, and the snare is broken. There remain only three or four encampments; the forty years will then have expired, and they will have arrived at their destination. Nothing more of a particular nature occurs but the important fact of the death of Moses, whose place is supplied by Joshua.

But before we pass over to the consideration of this important event, and the encampments that still remain, I invite you to an intermediate meditation. By divine command, twelve individuals were nominated, who were commissioned to divide the land of Canaan amongst the eleven tribes. I say eleven; for

Levi was not to inherit with the rest, but the Lord himself became his portion. We will therefore, on this occasion, consider the names of these twelve princes, the signification of which is both instructive and edifying.

We find these names specified in

NUMB. xxxiv. 16—29.

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

“ These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you : Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun.

“ And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance.

“ And the names of the men are these : of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

“ And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud.

“ Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli.

“ The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel, the son of Azzan.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shalomi.

“ And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.

“ These are they whom the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.”

I have here given you a catalogue of names, and many Hebrew words. To this you are not unaccus-

tomed, and therefore I trust you will receive it with your wonted kindness.

The children of Israel are now arrived at the borders of Canaan, and are already beginning to prepare for their entrance into the promised land and the possession of it. The Lord God appointed beforehand the individuals who were to divide the land amongst the different tribes, and mentions their names. I have searched into the meaning of the names of these men, and find that the division of the heavenly Canaan is also confided to the same. I thought this remarkable, and am desirous of communicating to you the result of my researches, in the confidence that you will receive it gladly. I intend, therefore, to speak upon the significant names of the men who divided the earthly Canaan, as a figure of that by which we attain to the possession of the heavenly Canaan. Let us, therefore, first of all consider the two principal persons, Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, and then afterwards the ten remaining individuals, in alphabetical rotation. By Canaan, therefore, we mean, not the earthly, but the heavenly, and consider the persons above-mentioned as the means and ways of guiding us thither.

Whilst drawing your attention, first of all, to the two principal persons, we make the important remark, that Moses does not belong to those who are commissioned to divide the promised land; for it is manifest that no one is justified by the law, seeing that the just shall live by faith; the law, however, is not of faith, but of works. He who supposes that he shall obtain the heavenly inheritance on the path of obedience, uprightness, faithfulness, and virtue, makes a fatal mistake, although he imagines that he is perfectly in

the right. Moses, or the law, makes requirements, indeed; and what it requires is holy, just, and good. But it does nothing else than require, for it is not a law which could have given life. If this had been the case, verily righteousness should have been by the law, and thus we should have been able of ourselves to have acquired the right to an inheritance in Canaan, without needing any one else but Moses. The law, however, is so little able to give life, that, on the contrary, it kills—not sin, however, which would have been something very desirable, since it is its strength; for by it sin becomes alive, and extremely sinful. Its principal use consists, first, in producing the knowledge of sin, “for I had not known sin but by the law,” says the Apostle. Secondly, in teaching us how indispensable is Jesus Christ, and that without him we cannot possibly please God. Thirdly, in being a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ; and fourthly, in confining the individual with bolts and bars until he comes of age. The law can do and does nothing but condemn and curse, even that which is of inferior moment, and for a single transgression. Hence Moses could not enter Canaan, although he was found faithful in all the house of God: how much less, therefore, is he able to conduct any one else into it! Under his guidance all must die; his office is an office of death, and to be redeemed from the law is an unspeakable benefit. Moses is an important hieroglyphic. The law came by him, but grace and truth by another. Learn, know, and understand, therefore, that our own efforts are so little able to bring us to the desired aim, that they prove only an obstacle in the way, except inasmuch as they show us our own impotence and inability.

But whoso is wise, and understands these things? Observe, therefore, even in the fact that Moses was not included in the number of these individuals, the delicacy of the gospel. This delicacy will also be perceptible in the whole of the fourteen names which here occur.

Of the two principal individuals who were appointed to divide the land of Canaan, we notice, first, Eleazar the priest. It must appear extremely remarkable to us, how, at the very outset, reference is made to the gospel, in the circumstance of a priest being the first person mentioned, and having the preference. And how could it be otherwise, according to the gospel? How can we participate in the heavenly Canaan, except through the medium of a priest, except through his atoning sacrifice, his blood, and his death? Only then, when we are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. How ingenious, how in accordance with the whole word of God is it, to place the priest at the head, who now begins to act a more important part than he had hitherto done! Moses sets; the priestly star increases in radiance. Joshua and the priest belong together; the glory of Moses descends upon Joshua, and the priest enquires of God for him. Through the atonement of Christ, God is now propitious to us. Every thing passes through the hands of the priest. The sin of the people lay upon him; he made an atonement once and for ever. His sacrifice and intercession avail for us. For his own sake he blots out our sins, and remembers no more our transgressions. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we

may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14, 16.) No one attains to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, except through the blood of Jesus, and thus we have boldness to enter into the holiest by that new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; for we have an High Priest over the house of God. (Heb. x. 20.) O let us remember this!

" No more the bleeding victim dies,
The types and shadows are withdrawn,
Since Christ, by his own sacrifice,
For all my guilt did once atone."

The name of this individual thus appointed to divide the land of Canaan is as remarkable as his office. He is called Eleazar; in English, the Almighty's help or salvation, as the word is used in Hosea xiii. 9. "In me is thy help." And is it not so? How shall such miserable sinners as we are ever attain to the possession of Canaan, except by the help and aid of the mighty God? Our salvation is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Every thing is deduced from God as its source; and from what other source should it proceed? "Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above." The source of all salvation is the love of God in Christ, before the foundations of the world were laid; "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." "He

hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "For in him, and through him, and to him, are all things." "It is God who hath begun a good work in you, working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," and who calls that which is not, into existence; yea, who hath quickened us together with Christ, even when we were dead in sins, and when the devil had his work in us as children of disobedience. Such is he found to be by all who asked not after him, and with reference to all, it may be said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Whoever comes to him, as all do whom the Father hath given him, it is because the Father draws him; otherwise no one can come. Not only the final reception into eternal glory, but also all that is requisite to fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light, must ever proceed from that God who is our strong help. For no one can receive any thing, except it be given him from above. If the being willing is his operation, what becomes of us and our boasting? What is left, when without him we can do nothing? If we are called, which is the first commencement of the work of grace, "it is God who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." If we possess faith, it is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God. If we persevere in godliness, it is God who establishes us, and we are kept by his power through faith unto salvation. If we are chastised, it is by the Father of Spirits; or sanctified, it is "the Lord who sanctifies us." "Faithful is he who hath called you, who also will do it." Nay, where is there a good thought, of which it is not said, the Lord suggests it? Where is there any thing good,

great or small, which does not bear the inscription, Eleazar, the help of God? What else do the blest inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem praise, but the blood of the Lamb? Therefore away with all boasting of ourselves and our own ability. He that will glory, let him glory in the Lord.

Comprehend, therefore, this name well. If this will not lead you to Canaan, do not think of ever being able to arrive there. But this will administer to you an abundant entrance into his kingdom. Therefore become truly weak, helpless, miserable, and even nothing in yourselves, and with the Lord's help you will succeed. Thou art not too weak and destitute for him, although thou mayest be too wise, too strong, too rich, and too good for him. In whom, then, shall we trust? We hope in thee.

The name of the second principal person who typically divides the possession of the land of Canaan is Joshua. Hitherto we have heard little respecting him; but now we shall hear more, so that a whole book bears his name; even as the Apostle, in Heb. iv., points to him as having introduced Israel to the typical rest, by conducting them to the possession of the earthly Canaan, as a figure of the heavenly. This Joshua bears the same name as Jesus, and both names have the same signification—Jehovah, the Saviour. Previously, he was called simply Osea, which likewise means a Saviour; but Moses changed his name into Joshua, by prefixing to it a syllable from the divine name, denoting that he would be the type of a Saviour, who would be a man, and at the same time the Lord Most High. “There is salvation in no other; neither is there any other name given under heaven, or among

men, whereby we must be saved." For none is saved but he whom Jesus saves; whilst all are so who receive him as their Saviour, and in him they have all things needful for their salvation. Hence, if thou art desirous of attaining to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, thou canst only become so through him. "For it is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Since, therefore, such an individual has undertaken our salvation, and the charge of it, he cannot fail to succeed. Therefore cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Under Moses all must die in the desert; under Joshua they shall all live. They continued a season together, but at length Joshua remained alone, and Moses died. Happy for us, this Joshua never dies.

These are the two principal persons. Let us now consider the names of the remaining ten, which will afford us remarkable and sure grounds by which we may attain to the possession of salvation. You will observe with pleasure the pure evangelical spirit which breathes in all these names. The covenant of grace contains neither requirements nor threatenings, but consists solely of promises. To such, also, these ten names have reference.

Under the letter A appears only one name, and that is Ahihud, in English, my glorious brother. Ahi means my brother, and Hud—glory, beauty, majesty, splendour. A glorious name, and of excellent signification. It is committed to Ahihud, my glorious brother, to assist me in obtaining possession of the heavenly Canaan. Desirable fact! But who is this brother? Who else than he whom the Apostle represents as such in Heb. ii.,

who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and who says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." "Here am I, and the children whom God hath given me!" Who is it else than Immanuel, God with us, Jesus? This appellation Ahi, my brother, implies near relationship, and affectionate sentiments. The Apostle, in the chapter just quoted, has reference to this near relationship, and says, "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified, are all of one. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." The relationship which exists between Christ and his church corresponds in some respects with the relationship between brethren, and in others exceeds it. Brethren have one father, and thus Christ says, Go and say unto my brethren, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God;" and in accordance with this, he teaches us to pray, saying, "Our Father"—that is, Christ's and my Father. Hence our confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, says, so very excellently, in speaking of the ascension of Christ, that we have our flesh in heaven as a certain pledge. Our flesh was previously, for our deserts, scourged, crucified, condemned, and slain; but also justified and quickened; for the relationship between Christ and his church is still more intimate than that between brethren. There may be two brothers, but they may live in very different connections; the one supremely happy, the other extremely miserable, without the one participating, or being able to participate,

in the situation and circumstances of the other. Hence the Holy Scriptures not only employ the figure of brethren, but of a much more intimate connection, such as that of a head and its members; yea, it teaches us that an entire unity exists between Christ and his church as a great mystery. "That they all may be one," says Christ, "even as thou, Father, and I are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one." (John xvii. 21—23.) But there is a twofold oneness of the church with Christ. First, in obedience, suffering, and death, and in the consequent resurrection to justification of life; secondly, in the living spirit, which dwells, at the same time, in Christ as the head, and in us as the members; and thus all are ruled by one spirit, as the members of our body are ruled by one soul, for our sanctification and renovation. The effect and consequence of both is eternal glory, in the perfect fellowship with Christ and all his members.

This brotherly connection implies, secondly, loving sentiments, which awaken confidence. They are like brothers, it is said of those between whom a particular confidence prevails. How pleasing it is, therefore, that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren! He might, indeed, be ashamed of us. There is sufficient reason for it, even as Joseph, in Egypt, might have well been ashamed of his brethren, since, as herdsmen, they were an abomination to the Egyptians; and when we become duly acquainted with ourselves, have we not reason to be ashamed of ourselves? Yet, notwithstanding, he is not ashamed of those whom his Father has given him, but says, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me," even as Joseph was not ashamed of his bre-

thren, but introduced them to king Pharaoh, and endeavoured to inspire them with confidence by saying, "Come near to me, I am Joseph, your brother;" after which, he fell upon their necks, kissed them, and said, "Now, therefore, think not that I am angry with you." This relationship is of the greatest advantage to the adopted brethren, even as it caused the greatest suffering to Ahihud, the glorious brother. His love to them, and the obligation he took upon him from affection for them, required that he should undertake and pay the whole of their debt, however large the sum; nay, that although he might be rich, yet that for their sakes he should become poor, that he should entirely take their place, be wounded for their transgressions, suffer himself to be cast into prison, that they might go free, and even let himself be slain that they might live.

This brother is surnamed Hud, a word which has several excellent significations, all of which indicate something glorious. It implies BEAUTY, for he becomes the altogether lovely to the souls which become acquainted with their desperate condition, so that they exclaim, "I must, I cannot help loving thee." Every thing in him is SUITABLE; and just such a one as he is, do we require. All that is in him is extremely desirable. He is exactly fitted for us, as made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, as he who does all, and leaves us nothing to do, but to cleave solely to him and rely entirely upon him, who bestows every thing, and has and is every thing. He is full of MAJESTY, for this also is implied in the word Hud; full of majesty, as the true God and eternal life; full of majesty, as the glorious conqueror of Satan, sin, death, and

hell ; as the conqueror of the heavenly Canaan for malefactors and the like of them ; as riding forth in majesty, and on whose head are many crowns. He is also full of EXCELLENCE and GLORY. “ How excellent is thy name in all the earth ! ” It is not a dazzling, but a lovely glory, full of grace and truth.

O what a happiness to have such a brother, and to be able and permitted to call him Ahi, MY brother ! This does not depend upon our own deserts, it is a matter of faith ; but faith springs up only in a humble and contrite heart. The Hebrew **I**, which implies MY in our language, is not so insignificant as it seems. Worlds depend upon this **I** and this MY. He that can pronounce this **I**, is and will be saved, is justified, will be sanctified and preserved, overcomes the world, never dies, does not come into condemnation, is Jesus’ near relative, and has everlasting life. Joseph, however, does not immediately begin to discover himself, and say, “ I am your brother ; ” but many things must first occur.

Let Eleazar, Joshua, Ahibud, the glorious and glorifying brother, these significant names, be therefore duly impressed upon us ! O Priest, intercede for and bless us ! O Immanuel, Joshua, bring us into thy rest ! Be not ashamed of us, O Ahihud, but fill us with confidence and love ! Amen.

XXXIV.

BUKKI—CALEB.

NUMB. xxxiv. 19—22.

WE prosecute, on the present occasion, the consideration of the names of those who were appointed to divide the land of Canaan amongst the people of Israel. We take them in their alphabetical order, and have, therefore, now before us, Bukki, the son of Jogli.

The word Bukki means empty, or emptying. But how can one who is empty distribute to others? This cannot be; nevertheless, the being emptied precedes the being filled, and the being able to distribute. Does not the blessed Virgin say, “He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away?” Is it not the poor in spirit whom the Lord pronounces blessed, and of whom he says that theirs is the kingdom of heaven? Is it not the humble to whom he gives grace? And is it not said, “Before honour cometh humility?” “He must increase, but I must decrease.” This is the way in which we ought to walk. The gate is so strait that we must become little and empty, and be in truth a Bukki, in order to

pass through it. It is sinners whom the true Joshua saves; and thus we must become sinners in our own eyes, in order to share in the heavenly Canaan. What is referred to but this emptying, when the Scripture calls God one who justifies the ungodly, when the Lord says, his strength is mighty in the weak? To what does it refer but to a being thus empty, when it is said, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" and that it is of grace, and not of works? God has chosen that which is foolish, weak, ignoble, and despised, and even things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. Is not the word of God wholly directed to our abasement, and is not the guidance of the children of God intended to make them little and mean in their own eyes?

Bukki is called a son of Jogli, and this name intimates a revealer. The means employed for emptying us of ourselves are chiefly four; the law, afflictions, consolations, and chastisements. The law serves to convince us of our worthlessness, when the revealer places it before us in its proper light. We have a very evident example in Paul, how the law empties and confounds self-conceited man. What a high opinion he had of himself, and how much reason had he on his side! He belonged to that sect, which was the most strict in fulfilling the commandments, and so advantageously did he distinguish himself in this respect, that he was blameless, as touching the law. He imagined himself so full of righteousness, and so irreproachable, that he thought himself able to stand guiltless before the tribunal of the law, and of conscience. He was, at the same time, so full of

his own wisdom, that he rejected the whole christian religion, as a soul-destroying error, and all its adherents as culpable heretics. Zeal for the honour of God also induced him to persecute them furiously in word and deed, and whilst dragging others to imprisonment and death, he was himself ready to have gone to prison and to death, for what he regarded as the truth. He was hastening upon the road to become a great saint, and had already made much progress. But what occurred? The revealer now came over him, his former blindness was made manifest to him, and he clearly saw that he had previously neither understood the law, nor comprehended it, but like the blind Pharisees, had purified the outside of the cup, and had neglected the inside. His zeal for God and religion was entirely the result of ignorance, and on recognizing the truth, he confessed that he was a blasphemer, a reviler, and a persecutor of Jesus Christ himself; and that though he were to give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, he was nothing. From being blameless as touching the law, he now felt that he was the greatest of sinners; sin revived in him, and took him captive. It became exceedingly sinful. He included himself in the humiliating confession — “For we ourselves, also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” He called himself the chief of sinners. He was brought so low, that he ventured only to boast of mercy. Thus Bukki, the emptier, took possession of his soul, and emptied it of all its own righteousness, as well of all its own strength. Paul was humbled to such a degree, that

he not only said, "The good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do;" but even, "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." He goes so far as to say, "I am nothing," and speaks throughout very contemptuously of himself; and do not all the saints agree with him? Truly, the law, when properly understood, is a Bukki, and makes the individual a poor sinner; as on the contrary, when misunderstood, it makes us self-able, self-conceited, self-righteous, and such as rely upon themselves, and not upon grace. It is to be hoped that you are acquainted with this from experience.

Sufferings are also a powerful means of emptying the soul; and in this respect, also, Bukki belongs to those who are appointed to conduct us to Canaan. It frequently happens, as Jesus said to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst, but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." (John xxi. 18.) "It is through much tribulation," says the Apostle, "that we must enter into the kingdom of God."

Consolations produce a similar effect. "The joy in the Lord is our strength." When the individual is abundantly comforted by Christ, powerfully assured of his acceptance with God, and of the forgiveness of his sins; a lovely and fragrant garland of precious promises is wound around his head, and it is given him to believe, love, repose, and enjoy. In what a pleasing manner is he then divested of that which is his own! Thus tranquillity and rest are enjoyed, and thus the

weary find repose. The life of self disappears in the soul, and the life of Christ manifests itself. The parched ground becomes a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. They see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of their God. The thanksgiving and praise, and the hallelujahs that now ascend, are unutterable. "His praise shall for ever be in my mouth." What a humiliation before the most high God, and a sinking at his feet as in dust and ashes! What blissful floods of tears are often shed, what an offering up and regeneration of the heart, what fervour of love, what light and gifts, what holiness! Were any one to venture to praise the individual himself, how inconceivable it would be to him, how intolerable, to have any thing ascribed to him. On the contrary, he exclaims with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It would be a torment to him, to hear *his* holiness, faith, confidence, and strength commended. Thus these consolations delightfully humble him in the dust, like that sinful woman, who lay at Jesus' feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and like Mary at the sepulchre, who exclaimed, "Rabboni!" and worshipped him.

It is, however, undeniable, that we must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation; that is, through chastisement. The profound corruption of our evil, aspiring, and self-loving nature, seeks in time its food, even from these delights, and wishes, as did Adam, to become like unto God, and to appropriate to itself that which is God's. The individual then

begins to think himself to be something, and a secret pride insinuates itself at being so believing, so enlightened, and so gifted, and self-love takes its abundant tithe from it. How was it, even with the highly-favoured Paul? His being caught up into the third heaven, began to produce an evil result. A temptation to exalt himself in consequence, began to be felt, and this, as we see in the case of Adam, is a parent of declension from God. How much easier was it for Peter to build upon that which he found in himself, and thus cause himself that grievous fall, from which he would never have recovered himself, had not the intercession of his Lord come to his aid. When David boastingly said, "I shall never be moved, for the Lord, by his favour, has made my mountain to stand strong;" something impure must have mingled with it; for a chastisement immediately follows; "But when thou didst hide thy face, I was troubled." It still frequently happens, according to the words of the prophet, (Ezek. xvi.) "Thou wast decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work. I decked thee, also, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a beautiful crown upon thy head;" but it is afterwards said, "Thou didst trust in thine own beauty." But now the time of chastisement arrives, in which the Father of Spirits chastises his children, that they may become partakers of his holiness. Instead of relying upon the grace which they find in themselves, they are compelled to place their confidence entirely in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

Many things must be learnt and repeated a second time, and even oftener, and the same fluency is no

longer felt as before. Poverty of spirit takes increasing possession of the mind, and the man is compelled to live upon the bounty of the gracious giver. O how emphatic are now such passages as the following; "Without me, ye can do nothing." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy." "No one can receive any thing, except it be given him from heaven." With what fervour does he now pray, "Quicken me by thy word!" "Satisfy us early with thy mercy." "Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." It is thus the soul becomes emptied; the beauteous gifts depart, and the man is left to feed upon his own sorrow. The cheering views of divine truth are obscured; the confidence of faith decreases; former sins, and probably youthful sins, which he had long contemplated as cast into the depths of the sea, again show themselves; the state of grace itself is assailed; grievous objections are brought against it; he seeks to cast them upon the shoulders of Christ, but finds himself unable; he contemplates the righteousness of Christ, and the fulness of his atonement, but without any satisfaction. In short, language like the following, is now applicable; "I am poor and needy; my soul is far from peace; my heart melteth within me, and I am full of heaviness." Intimations of such a state are frequently found in the Psalms, which, at the same time, point out the way we ought to take when similarly situated.

Are you acquainted with the emptying process I have just described? I believe you are, and that to a certainty, if you are of the number of those, who have a residence prepared for them in Canaan. This

is a consequence of poverty of Spirit. It is with this we commence, and with this we proceed forward. There is also, in this respect, an increase, and that a necessary one. In order that Christ may increase in us, we must necessarily decrease in the same degree; be weak in the measure that we are strong in Christ, as foolish in ourselves as we are wise in him; as ungodly in our own eyes, as we are righteous in him; nothing in ourselves, in order to be all in him. Hence it was something great, when the Apostle said, "I am nothing, but the grace that is in me;" and again, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The way leads upwards, whilst conducting downwards, and the man gains whilst losing. If thou become greater in thy own esteem, begin to suspect. He will turn his hand upon the little ones. When thou wast little in thine own sight, thou wast honourable.

Let us, therefore, cheerfully assent to be thus emptied of ourselves. It is difficult indeed to believe that this is the right path; but when we become better acquainted with it, we perceive that it is indispensable, to enable us to pass through the strait gate. But although it may be painful, yet it causes us no loss. By various ways we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and the more we are emptied of ourselves, the more do we even here enjoy the first fruits of that kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Let us, therefore, not cast away our confidence, but rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and continue instant in prayer.

We now pass on, in alphabetical rotation, to the name Caleb. It is no unknown name to us. He was,

with Joshua, one of the spies, who were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land; and these two were the only ones who brought up a good report, which was contradicted by the ten others, who thus occasioned murmuring and uproar. This happened about forty years before, and consequently neither Caleb nor Joshua were any longer young. They endeavoured to encourage the people, which, however, embittered the latter to such a degree, that they were ready to stone them. But they were still living, and passed over Jordan.

The meaning of the word Caleb, is literally AS A HEART, a heart as it ought to be, and that is, no other than a new heart. Joshua and Caleb are almost always mentioned together, and Jesus and a new heart belong inseparably together. Not a heart as it is—the old heart is corrupt—but a new heart. In order to obtain such a one, we must commence by learning and knowing that it is not as it ought to be. Mankind not only generally overlook this, but form an entirely opposite idea of the fact. God describes such characters as “a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God,” but call him before their tribunal, as if they were empowered to prescribe to him how he must act. But God says, in very many places, and particularly in Jer. iii. 13, “Only acknowledge thine iniquity.” But the individual is unwilling to do so. He does not desire to be shown the greatness of his sin and misery. On the contrary, he takes it amiss, like the Pharisees did, who arrogantly and self-conceitedly said, “Are we blind also?” when Jesus was speaking of the blind to whom he gave sight, which they thought they did not require. “In-

struct me only what I must perform and avoid," is his language; whilst at the same time he imagines, that having already made considerable progress in this path, he will be able to succeed still further. He does not attach much importance to the doctrine of faith, and his sentiments with respect to it are superficial enough. On the contrary, he exalts the discussion of moral duties, and concedes them the chief rank. He listens unwillingly to what is said of the corruption of human nature, and even violently opposes it, although he grants that it may be useful to speak energetically of the commission of faults and sins. Thus a religion is formed without Christ, a godliness without grace, a righteousness without faith, and a building without a foundation. The whole is in reality nothing but self-will, self-imagined strength, self-activity, self-wisdom, and self-righteousness; in short, the life of self in its various manifestations. But know that a Caleb, a heart as it ought to be, is possessed by no one, who has not begun by perceiving that he is still destitute of it, that his heart is thoroughly corrupt, and that, in short, as the prophet Jeremiah expresses it, it is desperately wicked. Without this, no commencement has been made. To this conscious nothingness, God attaches his entire favour, and the more it is perceived and acknowledged, the more fitted are we to become the vessels of his grace.

A Caleb, a heart as it ought to be, must also possess the knowledge and conviction that it can by no means become so of itself. It is, perhaps, objected, that this very Caleb spoke the most animatedly against the people, when urging their inability, which rendered them unfit for taking possession of Canaan, and ex-

claimed, "Let no one be discouraged;" but we request you not to apply this circumstance improperly. Remember, also, how singularly Joshua treated the people, when he called upon them to declare whether they would serve the true God, or idols, affirming, at the same time, that as for him and his house, they would serve the Lord. And when the people unanimously answered, "We will serve the Lord, for he is our God," what reply did Joshua make? Did he praise and commend them? No; he said to them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord;" as if he had exclaimed, Be not so hasty! Sit down first and calculate the cost, before you begin to build your tower, and ascertain whether you will be able to finish it, as Christ says. Did he not also act towards his disciples, even as Joshua did towards the people? Did he not also speak forcibly to them of their inability, when showing them how to bring forth much fruit; and say, "Without me, ye can do nothing? Even as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John xv. 5.) It is, indeed, a matter of notoriety how much is written of ability and duty, and with what violence and bitterness; but as the latter is not spoken of with sincerity, no correct conclusion can be drawn with respect to the former. The question is not whether a man is able to do any thing; he may speak even with the tongues of men and of angels; but the question is, Can he do what he ought to do? And the answer is decidedly in the negative; not even the smallest thing, not even a good thought, either at the beginning or in the course of progress. "But," sayest thou, "I am not accustomed to do that which is evil or ungodly; the words are not applicable to my case."

Well then, hear another passage: "The carnal mind is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be," and hear Christ once more saying, "Without me ye can do nothing," "not even that which is least." (Luke xii. 26.) Be assured, that a heart such as it ought to be, is one that is thoroughly convinced, and becomes increasingly more so, of its entire inability to any, even the smallest good work. We can never do any thing right, until we are conscious that we are unable to do it, and in order to this, it is necessary that we seriously desire it.

Caleb, a heart as it ought to be, is a believing heart. When the Jews said to Jesus, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" his reply was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John vi. 29.) When the terrified jailer asked the Apostles, on his knees, what he should do to be saved, they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." It was in consequence of this faith that Caleb spoke so courageously, and opposed the despondency of the people. By this faith, also, the union of the soul with Christ is produced, by this it is engrafted into the vine and partakes of its sap, which causes it to bring forth much fruit. And, certainly, this Caleb is one of those who are appointed to divide the land of Canaan.

I conclude with the words of the eighty-fourth Psalm, where it is said, (verse 5,) "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are thy ways!"
Amen

XXXV.

ELIDAD.

REMARKABLE is the appellation by which the Apostle John designates himself, when he calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Does he not by this assume something which did not properly belong to him, whilst ascribing to himself that which the other disciples possessed in common with him? By no means. Nor does he in the least intend by it to exalt himself or depreciate the rest. I cannot believe that the Lord had such a particular affection for him above the rest, that between the Lord Jesus and John a particular sympathy and singular accordance existed, such as is often wont to occur amongst men, so that some understand each other very easily, whilst others misunderstand each other with equal facility. I know, indeed, that the Lord Jesus was a real man, and possessed every sinless weakness; that one man pleased him better than another, as in the instance of the young ruler, whom he loved, although, when put to the test, he was found wanting. That John meant merely this, seems to me too human, and therefore incredible. But if John had called himself the disciple who loved Jesus, would it not have sounded better? It does not, however, depend upon the sound; and besides this,

such a mode of expression would have been impossible and intolerable to a mind like that of the Apostle's. He would then have uttered something commendable respecting himself. But he declares, that "this is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The love which Christ bears to us, his mercy and his grace, was all to the Apostle. Therefore, when he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, he says so in faith, receiving the testimony which God has given. He says so, likewise, not merely on his own account, but for our encouragement and example, that we may learn heartily to say it after him, and to call ourselves, in faith, the disciples whom Jesus loves.

O how blissful and important is this! and, at the same time, how difficult and how impossible, unless the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to our souls! May he teach us to use the language of John, and bless to this end, our present meditation!

NUMB. xxxiv. 21.

"Elidad."

I have taken the liberty to say something of the names of the twelve men, whom the Lord commissioned to divide the land of Canaan. I consider the names as intimations of that which is necessary for all who wish to attain to the real Canaan, or eternal life. Something thus needful is implied by this fifth name, Elidad. In Solomon's Song, the word *dad*, or *dod*, often occurs, and is rendered friend by our translators.

Elidad, my God is my friend ; it is God who loves me, and is beloved by me. Is not this a lovely name ? Is it not the love of God, by which we are saved ? Is there any thing more precious ? Do we require any thing in a similar measure ? If this Elidad is commissioned to be our leader, we shall be well guided ; if he is commissioned to divide our lot in Canaan to us, we are then sure of it. Let us pause a little at this name, in order to know the love which God bears to us, and to believe it, that we may love him in return, who has first loved us, and acquire a boldness with respect to him in the day of judgment, as John also says.

We inquire, therefore, whose love is here spoken of, who are its objects, what are its manifestations and proofs, and its fruits and effects ?

Elidad, my God is love. What more excellent can be thought, expressed, or believed ? But let no one think it strange if we ask, Who is that God, of whom it may be said, he is love ? For without wishing to excite controversy, I would here quote the words of Paul, in 1 Cor. viii. 5, where he says, “ There be gods many,” and immediately adds, “ But to us there is but one God, the Father.” It can only be said of the Christian’s God, Elidad, and of no other. We Christians know only of one God, who has a Son, who is, at the same time, the Son of man. He that hath not the Son, hath not the Father, and has even no God. (2 John ix.) He that hath the Son of God, hath life ; but he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life ; for God hath given us life, and this life is in his Son. The Jews of the present day, together with the Mahometans, and the philosophers, together with the Ra-

tionalists, have, therefore, no God, because they are unanimous in rejecting the Son. It is in reality a strange jumble, which they call God, not knowing what they say, nor whereof they affirm, nor believing what they say, since by their actions they deny it, and say in their hearts, "There is no God!" because they have become vain in their imaginations. These people, indeed, talk much about God as being very gracious, and the words of John, "God is love," is one of the passages of Scripture, the truth of which they admit, and reject other passages in consequence of it. But, in reality, all that they wish to prove by the multitude of their words, is, that whilst serving sin, mankind have no need to fear God, whom, at the same time, they neither love nor trust, and concern themselves no further about his commandments than to speak and boast of them, and hope as little good from him, as they fear evil at his hands, which, however, they will not admit. These individuals even blaspheme the God of the Christians. Although they call themselves Christians, yet they will have nothing to do with their God. However, I will not attempt to wash these Ethiopians white. But if God converts them, they will then confess themselves, that they have hitherto lived in the blindness of their hearts, without God, and without Christ.

The God of the Christians has only revealed himself as such in his word. From it, and from it alone, can we learn to know him, and only then when he enlightens the eyes of our understanding, which is necessary, in order to behold wondrous things out of his law. It is that God, who is one in essence, and yet is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it is the covenant God, God in Christ, who was in him, reconciling the world unto himself. Out of him, he is a consuming fire, at which every sinner must tremble and exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" whom no man can thus behold and live. But in Christ, this infinite and majestic Being is accessible, and benignantly communicable. In Christ he is our Father, full of grace and mercy; long suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth. In Christ there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared; he is all worthy of being loved and of all our confidence. In one word, in Christ he is love itself. "And we," says John, "have known and believed the love which God hath toward us."

But this knowledge through faith is not an operation of the natural understanding and of the natural mind. Grace alone bestows both, which constitutes but one, bestows it in different degrees, and in a certain order. The individual does not arrogate it to himself by some arbitrary determination, whilst expelling other ideas from his mind. O, it is a sublime manifestation! Hence Paul bows his knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant the Ephesians, according to the riches of his glory, to be "strengthened by his Spirit's might in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, they might comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." (Eph. iii. 14, &c.) The individual begins with a profound acquaintance with his sin and misery, with despairing of himself, with judging and condemning himself, with helpless-

ness and the need of help, with and under the law, in its condemning, alarming, and destroying power. God appears terrible in his nature and attributes, in his requirements and threatenings, and in his judgments; so that even David exclaims, “ My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.” Love is then an attribute, which the soul cannot apprehend, and does so only when the Lord reveals it to the individual by his Spirit; he then knows and believes his love.

O blissful knowledge, the result of faith! O how much ought we to be concerned to attain to this right, complete, and powerful knowledge and faith! The more effectually this is perceived, the more vitally it will be believed, and *vice versa*. Let us, therefore, continue to stammer out something respecting it, if it should please the Lord to enable us to understand something of it.

He who loves, is God in Christ. And what an infinite value has the love of such a one, of an Almighty being, of one who has all things in his hands, who neglects nothing, overlooks nothing, and forgets nothing! How useful to a child is its mother’s love; since it would perish without it! But how often has this maternal love nothing but sympathy and tears, and, to its great grief, is the less able to help, the more the beloved babe is in need of help! How immense the value, therefore, of the love of an Almighty being, who needs not to concern himself about means, but whose mere will includes all means within it, or renders them unnecessary; whose ability to help is not limited by the greatness of the distress, but manifests itself only the more gloriously, so that he even brings the dead to life. So exalted is the person who is here

spoken of, that, rationally considered, it might induce doubts rather than confidence, how it can be possible for such a one to love a creature such as I. What was David compared with God? and yet Mephibosheth, the son of a king, is unable to find words to express his gratitude for the proofs of his love. He falls down upon his face before the king, and says, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" How deeply ought we, therefore, to humble ourselves before God! And how could we venture to speak of his love to us, unless his word had justified us in so doing, that faithful and infallible word, which is more sure than our thoughts, or the thoughts of all men! How unbecoming it would be, were I to venture, without being duly commissioned to do so, to give the assurance on the part of our earthly monarch, that he loved us! And how could we venture to assert this of the King of all kings, unless he had assured us of it in his word? There can be no idea of any worthiness of our own; for the heavens are not clean in his sight. Notwithstanding this, one who calls himself the chief of sinners, says, "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" and let him that is able to do so, boldly say it after him, whilst he that is unable, ought to learn how to do so.

Who are the objects of his love? This question leads us to the contemplation of a new wonder. Is it the principalities and powers amongst the angels? Is it, perhaps, five or six distinguished individuals amongst men? To this I have two answers to make. The first is, that in reality there is only one amongst men whom God loves, but that, for his sake, he loves also

all who belong to him. The other answer is, it is the world, it is sinners whom he loves. At this the Son of God himself is astonished, when he admiringly exclaims, "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The less of that which is lovely is found in the object itself, so much the more admirable is the love which is borne towards it. The most beloved amongst Solomon's wives was an Ethiopian. All that seems to itself to be something, and that seeks to urge itself upon God, and recommend itself to him, misses its aim; but the more unworthy any one esteems himself of the divine love, and yet hopes in it, the more assuredly will it condescend towards him. Is not the woman of Cana an affecting example of this? Jesus appears to have quite decided not to help her. He terrifies her with respect to election, and tells her most clearly that he is not sent to any, except the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But whilst calling them sheep, he indirectly terms her a dog; and whilst she speaks of mercy, he speaks of justice. She humbles herself under all this, and says, "Yea, Lord!" nor does she even resist being compared to a dog; she does not oppose the election, but continues to cry for help and mercy, and seeks no other claim than that of a dog. The greatness of her distress causes her to persevere in crying to him; and thus it is at length said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Couldst thou endure a similar treatment, because thou art in similar distress, as it regards thy soul;

when it should be said unto thee, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated!" thou mightest, probably, feel perplexed, but thou wouldst not rebel, dispute, recriminate, accuse God himself, or speak of justice, where grace only is concerned, but wouldst, notwithstanding this, cleave the more closely, with the Syro-Phœnician woman, to the heart of the merciful King of Israel, and experience a similar result. In short, the love of Elidad embraces none but unworthy objects. It turns its hand upon the little ones. He that is not little, unworthy, and willing to be nothing, is no suitable object for it. Besides, it is the praise of his love, not that we loved him, but that he first loved us, in whom there was nothing worthy of his love. Jesus receiveth sinners, and leaves the self-righteous to stand without. That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God. Justice would cause our ruin; all depends upon mercy. The gate is low, but he that is little presses through it.

Elidad—my God of love. How, and in what manner, has he manifested himself as such? The triune God has given the greatest proofs of it, proofs that exceed all comprehension. The Father has given up his only Son, and not spared him; he wounded him for our iniquities, and bruised him for our transgressions. He refused to listen to his pitiable cries, that the cup might be taken from him. He manifested his justice in him, and laid him in the dust of death. What must this, humanly speaking, have cost the heart of the Father, to act in such a manner towards his beloved Son! How great must have been that

love towards us, which could induce the Father thus to act, and to be angry with the Son, in order to pardon those who were deserving of his wrath !

The Son, in his love, is no less admirable. It is his love, his love towards hateful sinners, which induced him to bear the utmost, not only with respect to the body, but the soul ; sufferings which we cannot listen to without horror, but which he really endured.

But this is still insufficient for our salvation, if the third person in the adorable Trinity, if the Holy Spirit, had not manifested equally as much love as the Father and the Son. This he did, not only by preparing a body from the flesh and blood of the Virgin for our mediator, surety, and advocate, which he offered up ; but still does so continually, by preparing for Christ his mystical body, by accomplishing the election of grace in those to whom it has reference, by building them up to a spiritual temple, in which he dwells, together with the Father and the Son, as he has said, “ I will dwell in them and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. It is he who appropriates the salvation purchased by Christ to those who are the partakers of it ; who begins the good work in them, and completes it ; for in him who drinks of this water, which Jesus gives, he becomes a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. O with what faithful love does the Holy Spirit occupy himself with the soul of the sinner ! How does he seek to gain his heart and follow after him ; how does he knock at his door, and that for years together, in vain ! But when he has once laid hold of him, he enlightens him more and more, and does not leave him, until he has brought him

safely through. What love! which does not suffer itself to be wearied by any opposition.

Elidad—my God is love. God occasionally gives himself to be experienced thus, when his love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. That which is then experienced, the precious enjoyment which the soul then tastes, is expressed particularly in the Song of Solomon, and the refreshed soul is then able to apply such expressions to itself. It not only sees, but tastes, that the Lord is good, and this is an indescribable felicity, a foretaste of heaven, which no one knows but he who experiences it. The soul is then particularly able to call God her God, and finds no difficulty in uttering, “Our Father,” and saying, “my Jesus,” with the utmost confidence, and to call him her righteousness and her life. If thou hast ever been upon this Tabor, thou knowest how good it is to be there, what lovely tabernacles may there be built. The Lord, however, in the wisdom of his love, finds it good, occasionally, to chastise his children, and by painful chastisements to manifest himself towards them as a father. It is then not easy to say, Elidad, and to ascribe to well-meaning love, the sufferings which are so painful, however salutary they may be.

Let us make one remark more upon this subject; which is, that Elidad's father's name is mentioned, which is Chislon. This word signifies bold, hardy, and courageous. And are not some inevitable consequences of the love of God, when recognized, implied by these qualities? O certainly, when the love of God toward us is known and believed, it will produce a boldness,

a hardihood, a courageousness, and an intrepidity which are inexpressible. And will it not produce a reciprocal affection? Most undoubtedly.

May he, therefore, render us contrite, by a sense of his majesty and holiness, that we may offer the sacrifices of a contrite spirit, and of a humble and contrite heart, which are acceptable in his sight! May he cause his face to shine upon us in love; and may this love bring us to the possession of Canaan! Amen.

XXXVI.

ELIZAPHAN.

“ BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Peter, in these words, calls God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author of every blessing to the true Christian. He points out the mercy of God in particular, as the source of all the blessings, which mercy is manifested to the wretched, who possess no worth nor merit of their own. He calls it “ abundant,” on account of the greatness of the misery from whence it delivers, and the glory which it bestows, as well as on account of the adorable way in which it is directed towards us. The blessing is an inheritance that is incorruptible, whilst every thing else decays; never fading, continuing always fresh and pleasing; and unpolluted by sin. God also bestows upon the elect strangers, according to the foreknow-

ledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, a meetness for regeneration, without which no man can see the kingdom of God. This inheritance has two valuable properties. The first is, that it is reserved in heaven for us. Here on earth we must indeed be satisfied with the title to it, and with the hope of it, and not desire its full enjoyment. But it is secure. Nothing can rob us of this inheritance. It is in safe hands. Its second excellent property is, that the elect are kept by the power of God until they become possessed of it. This salvation is prepared by Christ, and ready to be revealed in the last times. But what uncertainties and perils lie betwixt this and that period! Even this difficulty is removed, for the power of God takes the part of true Christians. It is this which preserves us, as with a surrounding host and in a fortress, and assures us of the utmost security. It is added, "through faith." Through faith, confidence in God, who is able to preserve you, even as he will also preserve your faith.

To this the name Elizaphan has reference, of which we shall at present speak more at large.

NUMB. xxxiv. 25.

"Elizaphan."

This is the name of the sixth of those individuals who were commissioned to allot to the children of Israel their inheritance in the land of Canaan. The

names themselves are of no moment to us ; but in their signification we find pleasing hints what it is which must conduct us to the possession of our inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. Respecting this, clear and copious instruction is given us in the Scriptures ; but since it also conceals itself behind these names, we gladly strip them of their shell for the sake of its sweet kernel ; and so also with regard to this sixth name, Elizaphan.

Our meditation divides itself into two parts ; the first is founded upon the word Eli, and the second upon the word Zaphan.

You are already acquainted with the word Eli. The Lord Jesus himself once used it, in the most awful and horrible situation both of body and soul, after the three hours which he spent in the profoundest silence, when forsaken of his God upon the cross, and when the sun was veiled in darkness. This had been predicted of him a thousand years before, in the twenty-second Psalm ; and it is also worthy of remark respecting it, that this is the only passage in all the Scriptures in which the word Eli occurs twice in immediate succession.

El, as you know, means God, and refers chiefly to his power and strength. The letter i, in Hebrew, signifies “ my,” hence Eli means, my strong God. This word is, therefore, a word of *faith*, which utters the appropriating pronoun. It appropriates God to itself ; it appropriates to itself Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with his power and strength, with all his merits, obedience, and sufferings. O this little word is of most difficult utterance, although in Hebrew it is only one letter, the vowel i. The word “ our ” is easier, and

unbelief or weak faith often conceals itself behind it, which becomes apparent when called upon to say my instead of our. To say, "Christ died for us," does not signify so much as to say, "Christ died for me." To say, "He hath loved us," is comparatively easy; but it is of much greater consequence to say from the heart, "He hath loved *me*, and given himself for *me*." But without this appropriating ability all is nothing. I must be able to say that God has granted forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation, not only to others, but to me. This is not easy; it is difficult, and even impossible to pronounce it with joyful and perfect confidence, without fear or doubt. All efforts, in this case, are fruitless; and he who has not yet found it difficult, and even impossible, has reason to doubt of the correctness of his faith. It is not we, but the Holy Spirit, who produces in the heart the confidence of the gospel, when, as often, as long, and in the degree which pleases him, although his gifts and calling are without repentance. Appropriation is then an uncommonly easy act, which costs no effort nor trouble, but follows, as if naturally and of itself.

Without faith it is impossible to please God; by faith we become righteous, holy, and blessed. He who can believe can do all that is required. Every thing depends upon this single letter *i*, this single expression "my;" it is this which renders us rich, strong, and happy. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." The Apostle Peter justly compares faith, not only with costly gold purified in the fire, but gives it the preference, and says, "being much more precious." If any one wishes to be rich, let him believe. But this

is the work of God, that ye believe in the name of his Son.

The word or syllable i, “my,” is, further, an intimation of *love*. In this sense David uses it eight times in the eighteenth Psalm. Faith infallibly works by love; and the more surely faith perceives that this is not love, that we have loved him, but that he first loved us, so much the more purely and ardently does love manifest itself. And what is more blissful than to be perfect in faith and ardent in love? How easy is then every thing, which would be otherwise too difficult! How many thousands, constrained by the love of Christ, have joyfully sacrificed their property and liberty, and even yielded up their lives to the most horrible deaths; and how many have felt a perfect willingness to do and suffer the same, though opportunity for it was not afforded them! And to whom are the thoughts, inclinations, and desires of true Christians directed but to Jesus, although it may not be always in the same lively manner? “Yea, come Lord Jesus!” is their cry; “whom have I but thee,” their confession.

This letter i, this word “my,” is expressive of *hope*. That which is supremely good and desirable is reserved. God is a God of hope. “We are saved by hope.” “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” He hath delivered us, delivers us daily, and we trust will still deliver. We look at the things which are unseen and eternal, and reckon that the sufferings of this present life, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. He hath begotten us again to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.

This leads us to the second part of our meditation, which is founded on the word Zaphan.

This word means to conceal, hide, preserve, and keep. Let me quote a few passages where it occurs. It is used respecting the mother of little Moses, in *Exod. ii. 2, 3*, where it is said, "She hid him three months, and when she could no longer hide him," &c. Thus also it is said of the harlot Rahab, in *Josh. ii. 6*, that she hid the Israelitish spies upon the roof of the house, under the stalks of flax. This was a protecting concealment. David also uses this word in *Psalm xxvii. 5*, "He shall hide me in his pavilion;" and in *Psalm xxxi. 20*, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;" and in *Psalm lxxxiii. 3*, the Lord calls his people his "hidden ones." "They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones." I adduce these passages to render the meaning of the word Zaphan the more apparent. It implies a laying aside, a preserving and keeping, and has also reference to a treasure; so that the name Elizaphan might be translated, "My God has preserved me as a treasure. Truly, a suitable name for a divider of the eternal inheritance in the heavenly Canaan!"

We say, therefore, first, Elizaphan, God hides. He conceals himself even from his children. Hence we hear them complain and say, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me!" and entreat him not to hide his face from them, and confess, saying, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." This is a suffering of the soul, a painful suffering, such as is known only to the children of God who have tasted that the Lord

is good. It is as in nature, when, after beautiful days of lovely sunshine, unpleasant storms, hail, and rainy weather set in, and clouds and fogs conceal for a time the lovely face of the sun. It is true, indeed, that this also belongs to the making meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and is of great advantage, although painful. It serves to heighten the value of the benignant rays of the divine countenance, that they may be the better appreciated, the more carefully cherished, and the more thankfully enjoyed. The Lord also occasionally conceals his purposes, even as Jesus said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now." He said this with reference to the washing his feet; but this seemed to Peter an irrational act, particularly since his Lord and Master intended to do it. "Wilt thou wash my feet? The distance between us is too great. Thou shalt never wash my feet." The Christian may be placed in a similar situation, when, after a complete resignation of himself to the Lord, his eyes are directed to observe his ways. When did God conceal his purposes more than in the season of Christ's sufferings? There was not a man that understood them, and yet in those dark hours the mighty work of salvation was accomplished. His steps are not seldom in deep waters, and his paths in the sea. The church in general, as well as its individual members, is often obliged to walk in paths respecting which it might say, "If the Lord be with us, why has all this happened to us," why hast thou done this to us? Let us take a view of the way in which Jacob was led. Why was he obliged to mourn so long? Why was not Joseph impelled to send him news of himself? And, generally speaking, how often have

we to ask why? and how frequently are we unable to comprehend the reasons of our guidance! how often are we called upon to believe where we do not see, to believe in an all well-ordering but incomprehensible God! But the more strange the commencement, the more glorious the result. "Thou shalt see my back parts." When we think we have ascertained the way of God, and foresee what he is about to do, the face of affairs changes. He turns to the left, when we thought he was going to the right; up-hill, when we expected to descend. We act the most wisely on such occasions, when we let ourselves go, and all that belongs to us, and, with Abraham, go forth without knowing whither, nevertheless from faith to faith. But who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God.

The Lord also occasionally conceals his loving-kindness, both as respects the aspect and the enjoyment of it. The Lord is so frequently praised in Psalm cxxxvi., because his mercy endureth for ever; but Job complains that he had become terrible to him. It was not long after Mary had sung, "My soul shall magnify the Lord, because he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaid," when it was said to her, "A sword also shall pierce through thine own soul."

The new man has also his seasons, in which he conceals himself, and is not so conscious of himself as at other times. The Lord Jesus himself once asked his disciples, "Where is your faith?" It had so concealed itself, that it was no longer perceptible in them, whilst the unbelief which distressed them and caused them to cry out for fear, was sufficiently obvious. He even once said to them, "How is it that ye do not

understand?" The new man consists, in one respect, in the wisdom of the understanding, and in the other; in the sanctification of the will. It was therefore hidden from them. When David complains that the light of his eyes is darkened, he does not mean his natural, but his spiritual sight; and when he complains that unrighteousness prevailed over him, it certainly did not refer to a flourishing state of holiness, but rather to a state which the church expresses in the words, "O Lord, our Lord, other lords have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name!" (Isaiah xxvi. 13.) or, as Paul expresses it, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." (Rom. vii. 23.) In opposition to this, there are such excellent states of soul, in which grace reigns unto life, and where the new man breaks forth as the morning; where the old enemy lies at our feet, and we are enabled to praise the Lord with joyful lips.

Let us, however, consider the word Zaphan in a few other respects. We have heard that God, in Psalm lxxxiii., calls his people "his hidden ones." This stands in connection with Coloss. iii. 3, where it is said, "Your life is hid with Christ in God;" and further, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." If true Christians are often hidden from themselves, so that it is said to them, "Know ye not your own selves?" if they are frequently concealed from others, so that they reciprocally misunderstand each other, and are ready to inquire, as Joshua did of the man who stood over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, "Art

thou for us, or for our adversaries?" how much more must they be concealed from the blind world ! They are, indeed, living wonders. Christ is their life ; this life is in them, and yet not in them, but hidden in God. It will not, however, remain hidden, but be revealed in glory ; yet not before Christ himself shall come in his glory. Then shall they shine as the sun, yea, " the moon shall then be confounded and the sun be ashamed," in the presence of their glory, according to Isaiah xxiv. 23. Let the world then take counsel against these hidden ones.

Further, we have heard from the Psalms, that the Lord hides his people from the strife of tongues. He preserves them. He does so both generally and particularly. The Lord preserves his people generally, notwithstanding all that is said against them, in the state of grace, of which he gives them a sweet assurance in his word, and subsequently also in their hearts. This precious doctrine, according to which believers are preserved stedfast in a state of grace, by which their position is superior to that of Adam before the fall, is committed to the reformed church, since, in every other, the possibility of falling away is maintained. And why ? Because out of the reformed church, something is still ascribed to free will ; and what is more changeable and less to be depended upon than this ? But what would be a state of grace, if devoid of a powerful preservation ? The noblest pearl would then be wanting to the crown, and to the gold its peculiar quality of indestructibility. But this is the will of the Father, that of those he has given to his Son, he should lose none, and that they should be raised up at the last day.

But it is also manifest with regard to individuals, how the Lord hides his people from the presumptuous attacks of mankind. By what remarkable means has he not frequently preserved his saints in circumstances of the most imminent peril ! Thus we find one of them taking refuge from his enemies in a loft, where a hen laid an egg every day, which sufficed for his entire subsistence. And another, who was rescued from the fury of his pursuers by a savage dog, which bit him in such a manner, that he was obliged to remain in the village and seek medical advice. Meanwhile his enemies, who knew nothing of the circumstance, hastened through the village, by which time was afforded him to recover from his wounds, and escape. Thus Elizaphan, my God preserves me, so that no misfortune can befall or injure me.

Finally, the name Elizaphan implies, my God has preserved my treasure. See, therefore, how suitable is such a one to allot the inheritance of the heavenly Canaan. He is El, the mighty God. He is Eli, my God, in virtue of the eternal covenant of grace, and of the sacrifice of Christ. He is Zaphan, who hides and protects me, and keeps that which I have committed to him against that day.

Happy Israel ! How surely wilt thou arrive at the possession of the heavenly Canaan, since its allotment is committed to such persons, even the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. Amen ! Blessed be God !

XXXVII.

HANNIEL.

NUMB. xxxiv. 23.

THE name of the seventh prince commissioned to divide the land of Canaan is Hanniel. This name is of great importance, and sufficiently proves his ability for the employment committed to him. Hanniel signifies, the grace of God which is with me. And can he fail of an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, who enjoys the favour of God? Is there any other means of obtaining it than by grace? None. It is the only means by which the sinner is conducted to eternal felicity. Let us spend a short time in the consideration of this worthy name.

We ask, therefore, what is the grace of God? What idea ought we to form of it? To guide us to the right solution of this question, and to enable us to form a correct idea of divine grace, let us first of all call to mind some passages from the New Testament.

It is said of Jesus Christ, that he is full of grace and truth. In Romans iii. it is said, we are justified

freely by his grace without the merit of works. In chap. iv. righteousness must proceed from faith, that it may be of grace. Chap. v. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Chap. vi. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Chap. ix. "Not of works, but of him that calleth." Chap. xi. "If it be of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace." Ephes. i. 6. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, whereby he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Chap. ii. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "That he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." 2 Thess. ii. 16, "He hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace." 1 Tim. i. 14, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Peter i. "Hope to the end for the grace that shall be revealed." Heb. xii. "Let us have grace." And the whole canon of Scripture closes with the words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Now, if we collect together the ideas which are excited in us by the passages above quoted, we say, grace is the summary of all the blessings and powers which are requisite to procure the salvation of the sinner; from its commencement to its completion, all these blessings and powers are concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ. He is grace personified, the head from whence the whole body is joined together. Sin and grace stand opposed to each other, like the

disease and the remedy. Grace is no mere idea, no empty imagination, but something real, substantial, operative, and a superabounding power. It does not leave the individual inactive, but makes him alive, though he were dead, according to the power by which it is able to subdue all things to itself. It operates upon the understanding, which it enlightens; upon the will, which it humbles and sanctifies; upon the conscience, which it consoles and tranquillizes; upon the heart, which it soothes, strengthens, and fills with divine emotions; upon the whole man, which it justifies, protects, and preserves, and finally conducts its possessor to eternal glory. When any thing, therefore, is called grace, which does not produce these effects, it is not genuine grace; but if any one were to deny that these effects ought to be ascribed to grace, or even ascribed opposite ones to it, he would be speaking as a blind man might do of colours, impiously and blasphemously, not knowing what he is saying. We therefore understand by grace the summary of all the blessings and powers which are requisite to effect the salvation of the sinner, from its first commencement to its completion, and that all these blessings and powers are concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ. Grace and Christ are therefore one and the same. For he is full of grace and truth.

Let us now contemplate the properties of this Hanniel, which will clearly show that it is he alone who conducts Israel to the full possession of his promised rest.

Observe then, first of all, the exclusiveness of grace for the purposes of salvation. Hence it is that Paul says, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that

not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." He says further, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "I have not received the grace of God in vain." "By grace I am what I am." It is the only antidote for the poison of sin, by which we are all by nature infected, and even dead; it is the only means by which we are restored to divine and eternal life, exclusively the only means. The far-famed wisdom of mankind will never succeed in finding out any other successful remedy in the place of grace, which frees from sin, and bestows sanctification, unless trifles, to which nature is competent, are understood by the terms sin and holiness. The more wisdom and prudence a person believes himself to possess, the more does the Lord Jesus rejoice and thank his Father, the Lord of heaven, that he has hidden it from him. Every thing is proposed to such-like wise people in parables; so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand, and whilst boasting of their wisdom, they may be only fools in the sight of God. They seek to invent something in the place of Jesus of Nazareth, and erect an idol in his stead. Let them do so; they are blind, and those who suffer themselves to be led by them, are lost.

Grace is the only means of recovery in opposition to all the endeavours and exertions of self, however earnest they may be. There are persons, and these form the majority of mankind, who have many things, and often of a bitter and hostile nature, to object to grace, and prefer hearing of the commandments. In a certain sense, the preacher cannot be too strict for them, when attacking a variety of gross vices. I say in a certain sense; for if he preach the law to them, and

state how it curses and condemns to all eternity the most upright and reputable, and even those in whom only the slightest sinful inclination is excited, and such as seek to establish a righteousness of their own, they would not endure it. In them the words of Christ are fulfilled; they say, "I go," but do not do so. "Not those who say, Lord, Lord! enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of my Father." Such persons, however, who are seriously intent upon doing, are in a good preparatory school, by which they may in due time become conscious of their deficiencies.

In short, if grace does not deliver thee, thou wilt never be free. Even the intolerable torments of hell and its flames will not purify thee. Every Israelite who was bitten by a serpent, died, unless he resolved to look at the brazen serpent that was erected. And thou wilt also infallibly perish, if grace does not save thee, and graciously stretch out the hand to thee.

There is no salvation possible without grace. But it may be said, "Are we so wretched and desperately corrupt, and are our wounds so incurable? I do not find this to be the case, either as it regards myself or others. I am surprised, (says such a one,) at the Heidelberg Catechism, for describing human nature as inclined to hate God and our neighbour. I am astonished above measure that it thus describes it, and as being so totally incapable of any thing that is good, and inclined to all that is evil. I freely confess that there may be such wretched beings; but I am not one of them. I am blameless as touching the law. God be thanked! I am not such a one, although there may be base souls who have every reason for speaking so disreputably of themselves, and who wish to appear

better than others, by extending these sweeping assertions to others, and even to all mankind, whilst they pretend to be regenerate, and thus arrogate to themselves a thing which they themselves declare to be incomprehensible." True, indeed; this is just the point. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Men are willing to be pious, but refuse previously to acknowledge their sin and misery, and set themselves to work just as they are; they are desirous of being commended, but not reproved; of being praised, and not blamed. But here is the difficulty.

Grace is the most needful thing of all. It was this of which the young ruler was destitute, and hence every thing was wanting. It was this which Jesus himself opposed to Martha's activity. "Let us have grace," says the Apostle. (Heb. xii. 28.) The great question is, whether we enjoy the favour of God or not? Grace is compared to things which cannot be done without. What is more indispensable than water? which the Scriptures place, along with thirst, as an emblem of grace. The manna which nourished the children of Israel in the wilderness, and which was their only food, the rock from which they were supplied with water, were sensible representations of it; and the sun, on the one hand, and the enlightened moon, on the other, are figures of it. Were any one to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and had not this love, he would be only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is the treasure hid in the field; this is the pearl of great price, which is truly worthy of our going and selling all, however great our possessions, in order to purchase it. On the contrary,

it would profit a man nothing to gain the whole world, and yet lose his soul.

Grace is necessary for the commencement of godliness. It is the author of the first thought to arise and go to the Father. It is also necessary, in order to break through every obstacle, to renounce the world, and the favour of the world; otherwise it will be said, "Ye did run well, what hindered you?" They wither, however beautiful the appearance they may present. It is necessary in order to persevere. For he only that endures to the end shall be saved. Without it, those fall away who, according to Hebrews vi., have been partakers of the Holy Ghost. A breaker must go up before them, in order that they also may break through. It is necessary for conflict. For no one is crowned, except he strive lawfully. Grace is necessary for every particle of godliness. Without it, we can do nothing, according to our Lord's own words. Our watching and praying, and even our wish and intention to do good, must proceed from this salutary source, or they are only specious, and not genuine. "Ephraim, from me is thy fruit found." "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein." (Hosea xiv. 9.) "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is our salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." (Jer. iii. 22, 23.)

Grace is, thirdly, something operative, and very powerful. It is compared with the wind, which pro-

duces such immense effects; to torrents of water; and who and what can resist them! to the thunder; and what cannot that effect! to the sun, with its universal light and warmth. It is also compared to weapons of offence and defence; to helmet, breastplate, and shield, as well as to a sharp sword. It is compared to ornaments; to a ring on the finger, to embroidered garments, to bracelets upon the hands, to a chain on the neck, to a jewel on the forehead, to ear-rings in the ears, and to a beautiful crown upon the head. (Ezekiel xvi. 11, 12.) So that the bridegroom says of the bride, "Thou art all fair, my love! There is no spot in thee."

But let us notice, more particularly, some of the effects of grace. It enlightens the previously darkened mind, and affords the individual a totally different view of divine things from that which he had before, so that he is able to say, "Once I was blind; now I see." It grieves him on account of his sin and misery, and in this respect, is like a sharp north wind. It produces a godly sorrow, which yields a repentance unto salvation. It preserves, under these circumstances, the needful courage, so that we are kept from despairing, and still retain a gleam of hope. It manifests itself in the way of consolation, dispensing the sweetest comfort, which expels all despondency; as a correcting and guiding principle, which turns away the soul from the paths of error, or secures it against them, and as a sanctifying, preserving, and finally perfecting principle.

It is thus that Hanniel, the grace of God, leads to the final possession of the heavenly Canaan. For grace is, fourthly, something very powerful. As such, it

has manifested itself in many thousands, and still does so, either in a secret or obvious manner. The power of grace is displayed in the great multitude of those who, apprehended by it, become entirely different characters, however little prospect there might otherwise be of such a change. Think only of the day of Pentecost; remember what kind of people they were, even such as were still dripping, as it were, with the blood of the Lord of glory, whom they had murdered, and were still boiling with rage and malice, mocking at the Apostles, as though they were drunk. Call to mind the simple discourse which Peter delivered to these people, and contemplate the astonishing result which grace gave to this sermon, since three thousand were at once converted by it, and believed in Jesus, whom they had rejected. Acknowledge and applaud the power of grace, which not only preserved the christian religion in the most tremendous persecutions, but extended it in such a manner, that a heathen statesman of high rank wrote to the emperor, stating, that the idol temples stood empty, and that there was scarcely any one who offered sacrifice. Acknowledge and praise the power of grace in the courage with which it inspired the martyrs in the endurance of tortures, which the Jews first, then the heathen, and lastly the Papists, inflicted upon them for the name of Christ. Acknowledge and praise the power of grace, in the rude condition of the people, amongst whom it procured an entrance and a path for the kingdom of God. And to these, Germany also belongs, of which Jerome says, in the fourth century after Christ, "Who would have believed that even Germany searches out the passages of Holy Writ!"

How could Paul have ventured amongst the wise Corinthians with the foolishness of his preaching, except in confidence on the power of grace, which had there a great people, so that as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed! How could he have ventured upon the isle of Cyprus, dedicated to Venus, and into the harlot city Paphos, except because divine grace was desirous of saving at least one, the ruler of the land, called Sergius Paulus, from the filth of sin! What a considerable number has the same grace gathered even from amongst us, and is still gathering! How many sheaves are already housed in the heavenly garner! And how long has this gracious fire burnt amongst us! O may it increasingly extend itself! It also manifests its power in individuals. Were it not so powerful, it would not succeed in a single instance. But this is evident in some more obviously than in others. The further a person has removed from God, truth, and godliness, and penetrated into error, so much the more does the power of grace manifest itself in reclaiming him. Manasseh, in the Old Testament, and Paul, in the New, are striking examples of this. And still there is no want of living proofs, that “where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded.”

Hanniel, the grace of God, is with me. Canst thou assert this of thyself? Hast thou felt its powerful operation in thee, and dost thou still daily experience it? If this is really the case, how happy and rich art thou, although thou mayest not at this moment exactly feel how rich and happy thou wilt become. If the grace of God is thy guide and leader, how assuredly wilt thou attain to the prize of thy high calling!

On the contrary, how wretched thou art, and how

inconceivably wretched thou wilt become—and who knows how soon—if divine grace is not with thee! What are crowns and thrones, what are riches and honours, what is property and splendour, what are seasons of enjoyment? At most but flowers, by which the entrance to the pit is concealed from thy view, into which thou wilt infallibly be irrecoverably plunged and perish. And how great is the number of the unhappy and the wretched upon earth, who, thus without grace, experience a twofold hell; first in this life, and afterwards in the next! O dreadful state!

Ah, the inquiry, the examination, whether the grace of God is with me, and whether it is that which is leading me to the heavenly Canaan, cannot be too serious, too minute, or entered upon with too much deliberation! How many do not trouble themselves in the least about it, but sleep on the brink of perdition, and only awake when descending into the pit. Alas! alas! awake thou that sleepest! Do not delay a moment! For there is no work in the grave, whither thou art hastening.

Happy flock, which is committed to Hanniel to conduct to Canaan; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give thee the kingdom! However strange may be thy path, through sorrow and through joy, thou wilt at length arrive safe.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us!
Amen.

XXXVIII.

KEMUEL.

NUMB. xxxiv. 24.

KEMUEL is the name of the eighth prince to whom was confided the allotment of the land of Canaan to the Israelites. The word El, which signifies God, occurs in almost all the twelve names. In this name, the syllable Kem, is particularly remarkable. It occurs also in Micah vii. 8, and there means rising: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise." In the same manner, in Zeph. iii. 8, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey." It is likewise employed in Psalm cxix. 28, where it is translated "strengthen:" "Strengthen thou me according to thy word." In particular, we find the word which forms the first syllable in the name Kemuel, in Isaiah xxvi. 19, where it means being raised up: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."

We will abide, chiefly, by this latter signification, according to which, the word Kemuel means, God is risen.

Wonderful name ! God is risen ! This sounds as if God had laid himself down, and had risen up again ; as if he had been dead, and become alive again. Can greater absurdities be produced than such assertions ; and in them be found the cause of our being introduced into Canaan, and obtaining possession of it ? What folly ! What nonsense would then lie in the name Kemuel ! We are almost inclined to say, how could so foolish an idea ever enter into the heart of a man, to give another such a senseless name !

Be that as it may. If what this name denotes is folly, the Apostle Paul points out the nature of it in 1 Cor. i. 25, when he says, " The foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men ;" and that " God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." He confesses that the preaching of the word is foolishness, but only to them that perish. However, with the men of understanding there is wisdom, which none of the rulers of this world knew. For my part, I confess that this name astonishes me, since, for that period, so much of the gospel is contained in it. We cannot, indeed, maintain, that what is implied in the name Kemuel, God is risen, belonged to the creed of those times. This would have been too great a light in the existing obscurity, seeing that every thing was still involved in darkness. But was not Isaac, three hundred years before, a type of the resurrection of Christ ? Did not Abraham see his day, and was glad ? Did not our mother, Eve, utter the amazingly significant words, " I have gotten the man, the Lord." (Original reading.) The words of Solomon, " There is nothing new under

the sun," are also true, in a religious respect. The Bereans, also, found the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, when Paul preached to them, and when they searched the Scriptures, whether these things were so? The name Kemuel seems to me like a flash of lightning, which, for a few moments, illumines the darkness of the night, without expelling it.

We know that the name Kemuel, God is risen, contains a truth, a great truth, a truth of the highest importance, which has the greatest influence upon our salvation and future felicity. "If it be not true, that Christ is raised, our preaching is vain; our faith also is vain; we are still in our sins, and they which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished," says Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 17, 18. But Christ was delivered up for our sins, and raised again for our justification. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the glorious ground of our justification; for who is he that condemneth, since Christ is here that is risen again? the ground of our renovation and sanctification, for we are quickened together with him to newness of life, and by it we are begotten again; the ground of our hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven; and the ground of the resurrection of our bodies at the last day.

How necessarily, therefore, does Kemuel belong to those who are entrusted with the division of the possession of the promised land! Without him, all the rest would not avail. We should have perished, as the Apostle expressly says, in verse 18. Do you not admire, with me, the wisdom which placed these names together? Do you think it happened accidentally,

and unintentionally? Do you not rather find beneath their shell an uncommonly sweet kernel, and are not you pleased with the hand which assists you to open the shell? Even the name of Kemuel's father is remarkable, for he is called Shiphtan, the judge, for the resurrection of Christ was a judicial act of the Father, who, as the God of peace, and as a reconciled God, raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Hence Paul desires to know the power of the resurrection; or, to speak figuratively, to become acquainted with Kemuel, as the guide to the possession of the heavenly Canaan. Let us, therefore, consider the meaning of the name Kemuel, God is risen.

The person of whom this is said, is God: El. This presupposes, indeed, his incarnation; God was manifest in the flesh. The Word, which was God, became flesh, and visibly dwelt among us. God was in Christ. Otherwise it cannot be said, in the strictest sense, God is risen; for he is so only with reference to his assumed human nature, which is united in one person with him. But Paul takes no further notice of this difference, when he says to the elders of the church at Ephesus, (Acts xx. 28.) God has purchased his church by his own blood; in opposition to which it might be said, God has no blood. But he expresses himself more systematically in Hebrews ix. 14, where he says, Christ offered himself through the eternal Spirit. And since Christ is the true God, we may justly say, God died; and Kemuel, God is risen.

The dignity of the person of whom this is said, is of the most important influence, as respects the

whole. Are we not constrained to answer to the inquiry, "Who suffered? Who shed his blood? Who gave himself up?" that it was no other than God himself? By this we have to determine the value of his merits, when they are called precious; for they are of divine worth, and of equal value with God himself. By this we have to calculate the power and effect of these merits, and to estimate, in particular, the righteousness which they have obtained for us. It is a divine righteousness. If we lay the debt in one scale, and the payment in the other, how infinite the preponderance of the latter over the former! The death of God—the resurrection of God—what ideas, what conceptions are these! what effects must they not produce! Ought this not to be able, viewed in the light of the Holy Spirit, perfectly to tranquillize the most anxious mind, when able to reflect that God himself died for us, and was raised again for our justification?

Kemuel, God is risen. If this is something wonderful, it presupposes something equally marvellous. If this name implies a truth, as it certainly does, the name Kemuel contains, at the same time, the astonishing assertion, that God was once a corpse, and, as such, was unclean, which the Old Testament declared all dead bodies to be; that he was extremely unclean, a sacrificed body. And are not all these truths, which the gospel teaches us, although our reason rebels and starts back from them; salutary truths, which are most closely connected with our justification and sanctification, and are true and faithful words? What does our Lord himself say, with reference to this, in Rev. i. 17.? "Fear not. I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead,

and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." He was, leuitically, an unclean corpse, which, according to the law, might not be touched, without rendering the person unclean; that is, placing him in a state of inability to perform sacred acts. And how should he not be unclean, who took upon himself the filth of the sin of the whole world, and atoned for it; and if one sin renders us unclean, how much more such an innumerable multitude of sins!

But if these are very harsh assertions, in making which we must be careful to keep in view, that we are speaking only of Christ as suffering in our stead, and that although he himself knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; the harshest of all is, when it is said of Christ, that he became a curse for us, (Gal. iii. 13;) which was particularly exemplified in the manner of his death, on which, under the Old Testament dispensation, a curse had been pronounced. And it is upon this that the Apostle lays such an uncommon stress, that he is determined to know nothing, and to preach nothing but Christ, and him crucified, which is as much as to say, Christ the accursed; so that in Christ is set before us, both the curse, under which we lay, and the means by which we were delivered from it. All this is comprehended in the expression, "sacrifice." Jesus, dead upon the cross, or rather, if your ears will bear it, God, dead upon the cross, as a heathen oracle once expressed it, is to be regarded as a sacrificial lamb upon the altar, even as it is expressly said, "Christ, our passover, was slain for us."

But in order that we may derive benefit from this, it is first of all necessary that we vitally feel and

perceive that we are dead in sins, leprous, and unclean from head to foot, under the curse, and persons on whom God might justly manifest his wrath, as he assuredly will do upon the vessels of his wrath. If we are thus duly stripped of our own righteousness, and our own life, and become humble and wretched, the further intimations contained in the name Kemuel may then prove available to us.

For this name contains, further, the assertion that God is alive again, and raised up. His continuance in a state of death was long enough to convince every one of the certainty of his death. But when the previously appointed third day arrived, he manifested his power to take his life again, even as he had power to lay it down. He refused to be any longer in a state of death; and hence he ceased to be so, but was raised again by the glory of the Father. God hath raised him up, since it was not possible that death could retain him. This act of the resurrection was not a mere work of divine omnipotence, but rather of divine justice. God the Father acts here in particular as judge, and thus it is not without its significancy, that Kemuel's father's name is mentioned. He was called Shiphtan, which is, Judge. As judge, I beg you will not find the mode of expression too harsh, God had not spared his own Son, but had laid him in the dust of death, had slain him without compassion, in his most sacred displeasure, which was, at the same time, the greatest love. After having made him sin for us; after having imputed sin, not to us, but to him; and after having cast all our iniquities upon him. In all this, God manifested himself as the supreme and exclusive

Judge. We must fix our eyes upon him, and not stop at Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate. We then find supreme justice in every minutiae, and that righteousness, by which Zion was to be redeemed. We are then compelled to say, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer." We then no longer wonder, that in the whole night of Christ's sufferings, we behold no glimmering star of kindness and forbearance. God shows himself as judge, and that is dreadful.

But look here, O man ! It is in this character that he must also display himself to thee. It is indeed appointed for thee once to die, and after that the judgment ; but this is not what we at present mean ; we must all appear before the judgment seat of God ; but what we have here more particularly in view is the judgment which must take place with respect to thee, during this present life and season of grace, for thy good. The Spirit, which is to judge thee, must first kindle a fire in thee, and after having been baptized with water, thou must be baptized with fire. The tribunal of conscience within thee must cite thee before it, and thou must be called to account for every idle word which thou mayest have spoken. The intents and fundamental sentiments of thy heart must be displayed to thee, together with every thing which had previously continued concealed. And not only so, but the sentence of death, the sentence of eternal condemnation, must be so insinuated into thy terrified conscience, that thou shalt not know what to do, and art forced to exclaim, " Whither shall I escape ! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God !" In this manner, a severe and inward judgment must be held in

thee and concerning thee, so as to force thee to exclaim, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified;" and it is thus thou must appear with Christ before the bar of judgment. If God, as judge, gave up and slew his Son for our sins, he has also, as judge, raised him up and quickened him again. For the resurrection of Christ was not so much a work of divine omnipotence as of divine justice. It had cast the Surety, who had undertaken to pay off the whole debt, into the prison of death and the grave. He had paid the whole debt, even to the uttermost farthing, and hence he exclaimed, "It is finished!" The justice of God now demanded that he should bring the Surety again, with all honour, out of death and the grave, which he also did on the third day, and manifested him to be the Prince of Life by signs and wonders following.

But to whom does this refer? This has intimate reference to us, and to us chiefly; for on account of whose transgressions was it that he was wounded, and for whose sins was he bruised? Truly, says the prophet, for our sins. What does his resurrection prove? What else than the payment of our debt, than that sin is done away, and that our righteousness is brought to light? Hence the resurrection of Christ impels the church to exclaim, "Who is he that condemneth? Christ is risen again." Does any one inquire after her righteousness, she points to Christ, who was put to death for her sins, and raised again for her justification. Still more; Christ was not a private person, like Abraham, but a representative, like Adam. Even as Levi paid tithes to Melchizedeck, in the loins of Abra-

ham, at a time when Isaac was not born, to which the Apostle draws our attention, in Heb. vii. 2 and 10 ; so the church, reckoned as being in Christ, is regarded as present in him. Hence the Apostle says, in Col. ii. 12, " Ye are risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God, and though dead in sins, are quickened together with him." O what wonders are included in this striking name ! How remarkable, that we should meet with it so early in the sacred canon ! It is this which gives us the title to the inheritance of the promised land, and nothing else. " Because I live, says Christ, ye shall live also."

Seeing that we are so intimately concerned in the resurrection of Christ, and in reality more so than we can form an idea of, it is but reasonable that we should desire with the Apostle, in Phil. iii. 10, " to know him and the power of his resurrection," that we may also attain unto the resurrection of the dead. This power is two-fold. It is, first, a justifying power. He that is dead hath ceased from sin. How much more he who is risen from the dead ! And you are so by means of that faith which is of the operation of God. The justice of God himself has pronounced you righteous in Christ. What do you wish for more ? What could you desire more ? But the power of the resurrection is also, at the same time, a vital, renovating, and regenerating power. If we inquire, how shall we obtain the faith on which every thing depends, the love which is the fulfilling of the law, the patience of which we have need, the joy which is our strength, and, in general, the new creature, which avails before God ? The answer is, all fulness is treasured up in Christ, and

flows from him to us, that even as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we should also walk in newness of life.

Hence we make of the word Kemuel a prayer, and say, Draw us into the fellowship of thy sufferings and thy death, and vouchsafe unto us continually the power of thy resurrection, that we may, through thee, attain to a blissful resurrection, and to the possession of the heavenly Canaan! Amen.

XXXIX.

ZION.

NUMB. xxxiv. 24.

THE word Kemuel, the import of which we considered in the previous discourse, gives occasion for a few additional considerations in reference to some passages of Scripture where it occurs.

I allude, first of all, to Psalm cii. 13, where the word occurs, and is rendered by "arise." The church there prays as follows, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." In the same sense, the word from which the name Kemuel is constituted, is used in Isaiah xxxiii. 10. "Now will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself." But this period only commenced when Jerusalem and its vicinity was in a deplorable situation; for the King of Assyria had marched out against all the fenced cities of Judah, and taken them, and was on the point of capturing Jerusalem itself. But the Lord's hour was now come in which he designed to

arise and gloriously manifest himself in his aiding and delivering power, which he also displayed in a wonderful manner.

Now, as Zion is the term which denotes the people of God, it might be supposed that it betokened something very glorious. But this is not the case. It signifies, on the contrary, a barren place; and thus a principal member of Zion expresses himself in the words, "This is all my salvation and all my desire, although thou cause it not to grow;" and prays, saying, "Refresh thine inheritance, when it is weary, with a plentiful rain," which is also promised.

This Zion, this chosen church, may be plunged into deep calamities, has been often in them, is evidently still in them, and in the present day is to a great extent. The fate of Zion, as it respects the church collectively, is recorded in church history, and may also manifest itself in single members of Zion, as it really does.

Zion was in extremely painful circumstances during the period called the middle age, about a thousand years after Christ—a period in which Popery in particular displayed itself in terrible might, even to kings and emperors. Little or nothing remained of christian knowledge, since there were priests who could not read, and who even did not know the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. What must have been the state of the common people, since it was adopted as a maxim, that ignorance is the mother of devotion! The laity were obliged to content themselves with an innumerable multitude of empty ceremonies and pompous solemnities, and attention to them was given out as the way of salvation, by which forgiveness of sins and eternal life

might be attained. True godliness was so rarely to be met with, that the Germans, at least, were induced to make hundreds of complaints, and to desire a reformation in the head and the members, by which the Pope and the inferior clergy was understood. The complaints which were made, were acknowledged, indeed, to be well-founded, and amendment was promised ; but every thing remained as before, and even became worse. But God did not suffer the seed of the woman to perish in this season of darkness, although it was scarcely perceptible. A few were still preserved within the solitary walls of convents, who mourned like doves on the barren branches. One of these caused his voice to be heard ; this was the well-known Thomas à Kempis, who shone like a glow-worm in the night, emitting a beauteous light. God also awakened before him, a worthy bishop of Turin, of the name of Claude, who joined real godliness to a clearer knowledge, but who was soon persecuted, on finding adherents. The latter, however, formed, as it were, a lovely light-streak to the eclipsed luminary of the church, on which the eye delights to rest, although compelled to conceal themselves in the vallies of Piedmont. Many individuals out of the convents found such an amazing difference between themselves and perfection, that they felt inwardly ranked in the class of the publican, who would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “ God be merciful to me a sinner !” and went down justified rather than those who, burdened with the multitude of their merits, did not need and refused to accept of the imputed merits of another. Zion then presented a dreary aspect, and the cry was heard, “ Arise, O Lord, and have mercy upon Zion ;

for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof!"

But this petition urges itself very impressively upon upright souls in reference to the present situation of Zion; and this situation is more critical than is generally believed, however much of it may manifest itself. But the real cause of declension still remains in the back ground. Orthodoxy, on the whole, exists no longer, although, even during the time when it was general and prevalent, there was much that was deplorable; and notwithstanding all the strictness of orthodoxy, there was still a deficiency of inward life and real experience. But the state of things is now such as to force the confession, that orthodoxy has disappeared, and that to such a degree, that there are entire districts where nothing more is known of it, and where the inhabitants refuse to hear any more of it; and if, nevertheless, it lifts up its voice, as it occasionally does in the present day, in some of the capital cities, it excites as much astonishment as if it were something new, and is rejected as something entirely erroneous. The articles, in which every confession stated its faith, are laid aside and forgotten, and even the distinguishing appellations of Lutheran and Reformed sink into oblivion, and no longer possess any signification. In the course of time, every thing will be swept away, except that which is truly christian and evangelical. The Reformed are no longer Reformed, and the Lutherans no longer Lutheran, and this from lamentable causes; not because they are unanimous in the knowledge and profession of the truth.

Zion is, at the present period, in great distress. It is like a solitary sparrow on the house-top, and like a

forsaken cottage in a garden of cucumbers. The manner of life of the Christians of the present day, cannot be contemplated without our feeling urged to reprove it. There are, it is true, both with respect to orthodoxy and real piety, some happy exceptions, for which we ought to feel thankful. In other respects it is as described in Hosea iv. 1. God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; but swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, prevail, and one bloody act follows upon another; and yet no man dare rebuke, nor any one reprove. Is not this the description of mankind in the age in which we live? Can we venture to reprove them, and disapprove of their actions and pursuits? It would not be advisable to do so, since the consequences would be insult and hatred. The present age is distinguished by a love of pleasure. An amazing degree of frivolity prevails in every respect, particularly in matters of religion, conscience, and salvation. These things, which are of supreme importance, are spoken of with inconceivable levity, and beardless boys do not hesitate boldly to contradict grey-headed sages, and even the sacred Scriptures themselves, as if they knew better. "I make no conscience of it," say they, as if no other dare to dispute them, not even God himself, and as if every one was his own lawgiver. Woe unto them, when they shall at length be compelled to experience in themselves, that there is only one lawgiver who can save and condemn! (Jer. iv. 12.) A happiness and consolation it is, that God himself, according to Zeph. iii. 12, will leave in the midst of us an afflicted and poor people, who shall

trust in his name, for if he had not left us a small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah. There are times in which an Elijah supposes that he is left alone; and yet the all-seeing eye of God may still find seven thousand, of whom his prophet knows nothing. When we meet with entire districts in which no preacher of righteousness and no vital Christian is known, we turn our troubled eye to other regions, where it is cheered, and feel particularly impelled to pray, "Arise, O Lord, and have mercy upon Zion; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof; for it is time, and the hour is come!"

This latter is an expression which is not derived from an acquaintance with the divine counsels, but from the oppressed state of Zion, which lies, as it were, in the last agonies, unless aid be speedily afforded. It is true, indeed, that for many years we have heard nothing more of real persecutions with fire and sword, with the exception of what was commenced against the Protestants in France, under its former rulers, but which was terminated by the overthrow of the reigning family. But that which Augustine said of his times, is applicable to ours: "Formerly we were persecuted with the sword, but now with the dragon;" by which he meant, the erroneous doctrines which manifested themselves in the bosom of the christian church. Free-will every where leads the way, in order to seize upon the place of grace, the Holy Spirit, and Christ and his merits, and it proves very successful. That which cannot be accomplished by argument, is attempted by coarse or subtle calumny; throw plenty of dirt, and some will stick. Much that is of a religious nature is

retained, in order to attack other things the more securely. A noise, perhaps, is made about virtue and duty, whilst the real intention is to rob them of their root, which is faith. Satan is, doubtless, then the most dangerous, when he disguises himself as an angel of light, and his ministers, when they assume the garb of preachers of righteousness. (2 Cor. xi. 15.) Every thing that leads us away from Christ, however specious its appearance, is destructive to the soul; and this is the object in view. Christ is our life, and every thing is in him which is requisite for our salvation and sanctification, and the right mode of acting with reference to him, consists in becoming a partaker of him by true faith.

The Lord arises to build up Zion, when he causes his word to be abundantly and unadulteratedly preached, and accompanies it with the influences of the Holy Spirit, so that many are thereby drawn to God in Christ. Thus has God from time to time restrained the abounding of corruption, by individuals whom he endowed with courage, strength, and wisdom, and placed them in the foremost ranks; as, for instance, the venerable Augustine, who was induced, by the errors of Pelagius respecting the natural power of man, to reflect upon sin and grace, by which the church collectively received a salutary impulse, and experienced a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the effects of which are felt to this day. At the time of the greatest declension, the Lord awakened a merchant in Lyons, of the name of Waldo, who translated the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular tongue, and thus occasioned a great awakening, of which traces are still to be found in the vallies of Piedmont, although, in the year 1545, they

seemed to be entirely rooted out. But Luther's indestructible labours were connected with them, and were the more remarkable, since he seemed to be such an insignificant instrument, that the Pope was not at all afraid of him, till it was too late, and the Reformation had already established itself. I will say nothing of the subsequent labours of Spener and his friends, since much that was to be lamented was mingled with them, and since, in their zeal for vital religion, they certainly did not act with sufficient prudence, seeing that they treated the orthodox and the articles of faith too contemptuously, and deprived them of the respect which was due to them, by which, without intending it, they opened the door for rationalism, and the preaching of mere morality. People then soon began to speak of things which had become antiquated, by which they concealed their attempts to undermine the christian religion, and it seemed as if the latter would soon be accomplished. They were opposed by a few excellent works, but with little success, such as, for instance, "Scripture and Reason," and "The Bible a Work of Divine Wisdom." He who would otherwise edify himself, was obliged to refer to older works, and if here and there a single servant of Job remained, he had reason to say, "I only have escaped."

With regard to the present state of the church of God, I hold that we have much to fear, and still more to hope, the former ere long, the latter at a remoter period. Zion has much to fear. Our Lord, however, says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Fear not, for not a hair of your heads shall perish." The Scriptures, nevertheless, speak of dis-

tresses into which Zion shall fall, such as have never been before, and of times, in which, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived ; times in which no man would be saved, if those days were not shortened ; times in which extraordinary things will occur, such as Satanic signs, wonders, and powers, for the purpose of deceiving all that dwell upon earth, whose names are not written in the book of life ; times in which some individual, or body of men, called antichrist, the man of sin, the false prophet, the beast that cometh up out of the pit, will stand forth in great power, the period of declension from God and Christ, and of the worshipping of a strange god. These times, in their whole extent, have never yet occurred, and are, therefore, still in prospect, and cannot be far distant, as may be inferred from many signs. “ But what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch !” (Mark xiii. 37.) “ Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” (Rev. xvi. 15.)

However, after this gloomy night, a more glorious day will dawn, than has been hitherto experienced. The most glorious hopes unfold themselves to us at no very great distance. Zion will beam with a radiance she never before possessed. Children shall be born unto the Lord, as dew from the womb of the morning. The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. The saints will have nothing left to wish for, and will flourish as the palm-tree. They shall be inundated with abundant consolation, and all the people shall rejoice. Zion shall then be called Hephzibah, and God will fulfil his mighty promises. “ But ye have need of patience, that after

having done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise." Do we not observe already many undeniable and pleasing preparations for the manifestation of this glory, if we will not be unjust with respect to the present, and unthankful towards God? Do we not even hear of preachers who are converted; although preachers are of all others the most difficult to convert? What an astonishing and delightful difference is perceptible between the state of things twenty years ago and at present! How many towns are now obliged to submit to have the gospel preached within their walls, which, according to their own confession, had not been preached there for half a century! What pleasing results have been produced by the distribution of Bibles, and other remarkable institutions of the present day! Let us not be suspicious, nor go too far in our mistrust; we shall then observe, in the imperfect efforts of our own times, preparations for greater and more blessed results in future.

At present, the sentiment of the passage we have been considering, lies near the hearts of all the servants of God, that the Lord would arise and have mercy upon Zion. But let every one at the same time see to it, that he do not preach to others, and be himself a cast-away. Outward exertions are only like trimming the lamp; but the chief thing that makes it burn, is the latent oil.

There is a Zion; but many are entirely ignorant of it, many assault it, many blaspheme and reproach it, and speak all manner of evil against it, and many seek to do it all possible injury. But its foundations are firm. Upon this rock, which is Christ himself, he builds his church, so that the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it. He that falls upon this rock, shall be dashed to pieces ; but he upon whom it falls, shall be ground to powder, and is consequently lost in every case.

But happy are all they who are born in and for Zion ! And it is with this birth as with another, of which Christ says, " A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Happy is he who experiences the pangs of this spiritual birth, together with its consequent joy :

" O Lord, arise, and have mercy upon Zion ; for it is time for thee to be gracious to her ; and the hour is come !"

We have hitherto spoken of Zion generally, as in a state of distress, which compels her children to exclaim, " Arise, O Lord !" They speak of Zion's dust and ashes, and testify their pity towards her. But God promises beauty for ashes. Let us now speak further and more particularly of the individual members of Zion, and of Zion itself as a barren spot, as covered with dust and ashes, as an object of compassion, and not in its beauty and glory.

To this, those passages in Isaiah have reference, which we read in chap. lii. 1, 2 ; and chap. lx. 1. The address is very beautiful, " Jerusalem, the holy city." But when it is said, " Put on thy strength, O Zion !" the weakness is implied which she felt at the time ; whilst the injunction, " Put on thy beautiful garments, thou holy city," implies a state of nakedness and desti-

tution. "Shake thyself from the dust," such was, therefore, her condition, "arise!" as if she were sitting or lying in it. What a painful idea is communicated of Jerusalem, when it is said, "Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck," and when the daughter of Zion is addressed as a captive! And when it is said, in chap. lx. "Arise, shine!" it has evidently reference to a state of gloom and darkness. How many passages are there in the Psalms, the contents of which confirm this, and the quotation of which is unnecessary!

But on proceeding to make a few observations upon the distressed state and declension of Zion in its individual members, I do not intend to regard the term as implying exclusively genuine godliness. There is also a middle class, respecting which it is dubious whether they belong to the real sheep of the Lord's fold or not. Much that is good is seen in them, and though they may not belong to those whom the Lord Jesus compares with the blade, much less with the full corn in the ear; yet there is hope that this may subsequently be the case with them, and that if not yet converted and believing, they are nevertheless awakened, and that it will be to them according to the saying, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance," and such is really the case with many. They grow; they assume a more decided form, and are more thoroughly pervaded by spiritual life. But with others, the case is not so. They remain continually upon the same spot, and make no progress. Many of them even go back and fall away; but this is also in accordance with Scripture. There are those, as Christ says, who receive the word with joy, and believe for a season; but in time of temptation, they fall away; for

they have no root. In John's time, there were those who appeared to belong to the true church; but, in the sequel, they went out from them; by which they proved that they had never really belonged to them, for had that been the case, they would no doubt have continued with them. Demas was an intimate acquaintance, and even a friend of Paul's, but he loved the present world, from which he had separated himself, and forsook the worthy Apostle. Paul even says, in 1 Tim. i. 19, that some had made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and mentions the names of some, whom he had given over unto Satan to be chastised, that they might learn not to blaspheme. He finds it necessary also, in Heb. iii. 13, to call upon Christians to admonish one another daily, and so much the more, as they saw the day approaching, lest any should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Danger exists, therefore, and every thing depends upon escaping from it, or on being delivered from it by the proper means. Does not Peter, in 2 Ep. ii. 20, write, saying, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them," and confirms the whole by a disgusting proverb of dogs and swine, which such persons resemble. He, therefore, exhorts them also, and says, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, "Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the

truth?" Had the young king of Israel shot five or six times, he would have overcome his enemies, but he did it only thrice, and thus failed of accomplishing the object. "Be not slothful in business, fervent in spirit."

Thus there are many who do not advance, but go back; are awakened, but fall asleep again; do not fulfil the expectations formed of them; blossom, indeed, but bear no fruit; do not avail themselves of the grace of God, and even become adversaries, or, at least, but mere babblers, and bring an evil report upon the kingdom of God. This is particularly the case in numerous awakenings, of which often little or nothing remains. The Apostle Jude calls them "Trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, clouds without water," which give the expectation of rain, but the wind chases them all away again.

The individuals of whom we are speaking, and who, for a season, promised fair, fall, in course of time, into a state of lamentable declension. They are deficient, both in a thorough knowledge of themselves, and in grace. They imitate others, particularly those who are looked up to, without experiencing any thing themselves, and probably use lofty language, which is devoid of all unction. They manifest, perhaps, particular diligence in a variety of outward and specious things, and are like the Pharisees, who did many things, in order to be seen of men, and obtain their praise, who would probably have drawn back, had they reaped insult and vexation from them. But their inward declension frequently displays itself in their outward actions, so that they no longer seem to be what they never were. How happy are they,

of whom it may be said, that it is the true grace wherein they stand ! He who does not enter in by the right door, is a thief and a murderer. How lamentable is the case of him to whom the words in Rev. iii. 1, refer ! “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Hold fast, therefore, and repent. If not, ye shall die, (Ezek. xviii. 26.) “Every plant which my Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” “Every branch that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.”

Even as it is the case with Zion, in general, that for a season it may decline, and fall into decay, so it may likewise be with individuals amongst its true members. They may be like fruit-trees in winter, both externally and internally ; and I am of opinion, may fall into sufferings which they have themselves incurred, as well as into such as are of divine dispensing. To the latter belong the sufferings of Job, and to the former many of David's, which befell him, because he had excited the lusts of the adversary, so that the sword swept away seventy thousand men. But God himself says to Satan respecting Job, “Thou movedst me against him to destroy him without a cause.”

As it regards the outward circumstances, which oppress Zion in its members ; there was frequent cause for applying to them, what Paul says of himself, as given over unto death, as counted like sheep for the slaughter, and when he speaks of tribulation, distress, and opposition. Horror and dread come over us, when the sufferings of the martyrs are described to us, which the Roman Catholics inflicted upon those of our confession in Cabrieres and Merindol, when they

filled up their wells with stones, destroyed their fields and gardens, and cut down their orchards; and when they drove young and old, and even little children, into barns, and then set fire to them, pushing those back with spears, who endeavoured to escape from the flames. Had not Zion, then, cause to exclaim, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me;" and to say, "If the Lord is with us, why, then, has all this happened to us?" And what does not the Apostle state, in Hebrews xi. concerning persons of whom the world was not worthy? Is not this an intricate procedure of Providence? And how does it fare with many of the highly-favoured children of God externally? In such a manner, that they may say with David, "I am born to affliction." But in this respect, there is nothing particular to be observed; for the same things happen to the righteous as to the wicked; and Solomon was not the only one who saw that one event happens unto both, and that it fares with the righteous as if they had done the works of the wicked, and with the latter, as if they had done the works of the righteous. It is also remarkable, that persons sometimes fall into painful circumstances, on beginning to lead a godly life. Jesus meets them with a heavy cross, on coming from the field. These outward sufferings may certainly have been incurred by their own fault, and the question, by what have I merited this? is not always to be rejected. If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. Thou art poor; but if thou art not frugal, diligent, and economical, do not wonder at it. Thou art sickly; perhaps an effect of earlier sins and excesses. Ye sinners, enter into your hearts, and humble yourselves under the

mighty hand of God. Thou hast, perhaps, a hard and ungovernable heart, so that such hard strokes and painful blows are necessary and salutary. It is for our iniquities that we are often chastised, since none is guiltless before the Lord. Nevertheless, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

But the inhabitants of Zion may also fall into inward and spiritual distress. Though inclined to say something upon this subject, we can only do so with a degree of reserve, and must content ourselves with giving a few hints. It is a difficult, and, at the same time, a needless task, to determine minutely how far a person may advance in light and gifts, and yet be only a natural man; and, on the other hand, how far a person may sink and fall, and yet be and continue a child of God. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Generally speaking, the criterion to which we are directed is, that the tree is known by its fruits. But who can do this in winter? There is, however, a declension in knowledge. And when Christ speaks of times, in which, if it were possible, even the elect may be deceived; the expression, though implying a perfect security with respect to the whole, leaves it undecided, with reference to individuals, how far a child of God may be involved in a variety of errors. Augustine, whom we justly honour as a highly enlightened saint, did not understand the doctrine of justification, and exchanged or mingled it with sanctification, although he conceded nothing to free-will. Paul was apprehensive concerning the Corinthians, lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. There

are those who are fond of innovation, who are not satisfied with old things, but seek to say and hear something new in religion. There are those who read much, without trying the spirits, whose hearts are not yet established, and are therefore moved about by every wind of doctrine, and who become increasingly unstable. There are those who have not been humbled, who love such a species of teaching as still reserves and concedes something to their self-love and self-estimation. There are sophists, who are desirous of constituting their own thoughts and opinions as judges, even in spiritual things. Many are still full of prejudices, so that only the name of him who asserts something need be mentioned, in order to render the most important truths suspected. These are carnal, as the Apostle calls the Corinthians. Hence, so long as nature continues in full bloom, and as long as the circumcising knife has not lopped off the superfluous twigs; as long as any one is still so full of himself, it is a proof that he is deeply immersed in folly, in consequence of the idea of his own wisdom; that he sees men as trees walking, and has need that Jesus lay his hands upon him a second time. Let us, therefore, make ourselves well acquainted with the two principal points in religion, sin and grace.

There is also a declension and spiritual decay into which individuals in Zion may fall. I will not now speak of cases of actual sin, which, as the word of God itself teaches, prove as little that any one is without grace, as a natural fall proves that a person is lame. But all such cases are very dangerous, lamentable, and ominous, and are so much the worse and more dangerous, when the individual becomes careless, daring,

and secure. There is then a danger of his being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and he proves by it that all is not right within, and perhaps has never been so, and that he is not authorized to regard himself as a citizen of Jerusalem, but rather to consider from whence he has fallen, and repent.

But there is still a state of another kind into which the individual may fall, more in his own opinion and consciousness than in reality. This happens chiefly to those who are adorned with particular gifts of grace, of which they are afterwards deprived, either in consequence of some previous fault or otherwise. They probably possessed an extraordinary degree of light, and fathomed the most glorious truths in a delightful manner, even to the very bottom. But the light of their eyes is now taken away, and they scarcely see a glimmer of it. They possessed such a powerful faith that they could wholly appropriate Christ to themselves, in whom all the promises are yea and amen, without hesitation, and with joy; which they can now do only with a trembling hand, and scarcely venture to do even this. They enjoyed such rich consolations, and felt themselves so pervaded by them, that they could not well endure troubled Christians, and had no idea that their way in future would be any other than that indicated in Psalm xxiii., so that they felt at liberty to exclaim, "We shall never be moved." They viewed and regarded themselves, in Christ, as so righteous and holy, as if they had never committed a single sin, and felt boldness even with respect to the day of judgment. They became also abundantly conscious that they were thus standing upon the true foundation on which holiness and godliness best succeed; where the yoke of

Christ is really easy and his burden light, and where the adversary is trodden under foot. This was accompanied by the idea that it would not only always continue thus, but be daily more glorious. But what a lamentable change has taken place ! The joy is turned into mourning, and the garments of praise into the spirit of heaviness. This is a very grievous state as it respects feeling, but useful in its effects, and various in its degrees, as well as in its duration.

But it continues as long as is good for the individual. All the man's own efforts to extricate himself prove fruitless. Jerusalem is a captive. She sits in the dust ; the holy city is plunged into the mire, and her neck is in bands. And this continues until it is said to her, " Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," and until the command goes forth to her, as in Isaiah lii. 1, 2. O what a pleasing injunction ! How every thing is again changed by it, so that beauty is given her for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Zion puts on her strength, so as from weakness to become strong, and be able to do all things through Christ strengthening her. She adorns herself gloriously, since she is clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. She finds that God acknowledges her as a holy city, and also regards herself as such. Sampson's hair grows again, and now woe to the Philistines ! The prayer of the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 28, is fulfilled, " Strengthen me according to thy word !"

Thus Israel grows like the lily, when the Lord is as dew unto it. (Hosea xiv. 5.) " From me is thy fruit found." (v. 9.)

Examine yourselves. What are you? To whom do you belong? Have you stopped short in the birth? Much, perhaps, has taken place in you, especially at your confirmation. But what has resulted from it? Has no one hired you? And are you, on that account, still standing idle in the market-place? Are you clouds without water; trees twice dead? O return! return! Be diligent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Are you still active, still engaged in seriously asking, seeking, and knocking? Continue to do so, and give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you; and knock with increasing violence, until it is opened to you.

But are you really in a state of declension? happy for you, if you sincerely confess it, if it causes you grief, if you are willing to rise up again, after having fallen! If thou fall, lose no time in rising again.

Art thou in a mournful state? "Awake, awake, O Zion, put on thy strength!" "Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" Amen.

XL.

PALTIEL.

NUMB. xxxiv. 26.

THE prince above-mentioned is also one of the twelve whom God commissioned to divide the land of Canaan amongst the twelve tribes; and that which this name indicates, is the same that assists every one to that salvation to which he attains. For in the name Paltiel is contained that which Paul says, in 2 Tim. iv. 18. "The Lord shall deliver me from all evil, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." For the meaning of the word Paltiel is, The strong God is my deliverer.

Let me quote a few passages where the word occurs. David makes use of it in Psalm xviii. 48, "He delivereth me from my enemies;" and in Psalm xxxii. 7, "Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Psalm xxxvii. 40, "The Lord shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because

they trust in him." Isaiah iv. 2, "The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."

The strong God is my deliverer. A deliverer is one who helps us out of great distresses and dangers, and places us in a state of security and prosperity. And such a one is God here represented. Hence this Paltiel is also extremely suitable to aid Israel in taking possession of Canaan. It is an expression of faith.

In considering this name, let us direct our attention, first, to the danger, and secondly, to the deliverance.

The danger, the wretchedness, and the necessity for such a deliverer is inexpressibly great and urgent. But it is a danger which is not perceived, felt, nor estimated, and this is perhaps the worst part of it. Mankind are, as it were, dead in it; and hence they are so indifferent with respect to a deliverer.

We will not, however, let this affect us; but first of all describe this danger in some measure, though wisdom is compelled to exclaim, they refuse my counsel, and despise all my reproof; the result of which, therefore, is, "I will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh."

The wretchedness into which we are plunged is so great, that no understanding can conceive of it, and no tongue express it; a calamity in which the majority of mankind have already sunk and perished, and in which—though it is dreadful to think of, yet true—the majority will sink and perish, and are hasting towards it with rapid strides—a calamity from whence no one can deliver himself, from whence no creature can deliver, and from whence no one even wishes to be delivered;

so that the disciples asked, with reason, "Who then can be saved?" and received for answer, "With men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible." And when one of them asked, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" the Lord Jesus replied neither in the negative nor affirmative; but said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for I tell you that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." If those miss the mark who seek to enter in, what will become of the rest. If there is no deliverer for us, we are all lost, and shall remain so.

But our wretchedness and misery consists in sin, in its ruling and condemning power. And yet, so perverse is the sinner, that he seeks his gratification in the practice of sin, and hates godliness, and every thing which stands in the way of this practice. We are, indeed, taught from our youth up, if asked which is the greatest evil? to reply, sin. But who is taught to regard it as really such, except he be taught of God? And how few there are that really know what sin is! And those that know it, cannot even wish to be freed from it, for they are dead in that in which, at the same time, they live.

We are here by no means speaking of gross sinners, such as thieves, deceivers, perjurers, whoremongers, murderers, adulterers, and what is otherwise contrary to sound doctrine, as if such alone were sinners. Ah! call to mind the rich young ruler, who was at the same time so modest, and in his outward deportment so humble, that he openly knelt down before Jesus; think of the sentence which the mouth of truth pronounces upon this excellent young man—a sentence which inspired even the disciples with fear and terror, so that

they exclaimed, "Who then can be saved!" He is blameless respecting the law, for he has kept every thing from his youth up as it regards the letter. He asks not after vain things, but what good thing he must do in order to inherit eternal life. "Inherit" is his expression, not acquire or merit. And Jesus afterwards first declares it difficult, and then impossible with men, for such a one to enter the kingdom of heaven. This amiable youth was in want of one thing; and we justly call him amiable, since it is said of the Lord Jesus himself, that when he saw him, he loved him. But in what did this one thing consist? For even if he had done that which the Lord Jesus proposed, which was, that he should sell all that he had, yet the Apostle says, though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, I am nothing. Look at those of the ten virgins to whom it was finally said, "I know you not!" In what respect were they different from the rest? Outwardly in none. They were indeed devoid of one thing which the others possessed, and which is called oil. But in what did the latter consist? If ye know it, happy are ye if ye do it. The former learnt it only when it was too late. What a misfortune! Therefore do not seek the misery which sin causes us, merely in the outward manifestation. It is within us. It consists of that hereditary evil by which we are rendered incapable of performing any thing good, and inclined to all that is evil—in spiritual blindness, in consequence of which the natural man knows nothing of the Spirit of God—in unbelief; since we live without God, and without Christ—in enmity against God, which lies at the bottom of carnal-mindedness; all this constitutes the old man, and with him you must be-

come acquainted, in order duly to estimate a deliverer. But you refuse, and even if you were willing, you are unable, for sin reigns over mankind. We do not mean by this, any gross manifestations of it. For instance, there are people who are so greatly under the dominion of avarice, that they are never satisfied with money, however much they may possess; who, so far from devoting any thing to others, cannot spare any thing for themselves, although they must, at length, leave their wealth to others, without receiving the slightest thanks for it. There are others who are so enslaved by drunkenness that they cannot cease from it, and refuse to do so, although their outward ruin stares them in the face; and who, if they saw the flames of hell before them, would plunge into them. Again, there are gamesters, who are so passionately attached to play, that they turn night into day, and risk every thing they have upon it, and often would lay violent hands upon themselves, rather than burst the bands that fetter them.

But no less terrible is the dominion which sin exercises internally, and of which no one is conscious until he begins to escape from it, when its yoke is once broken. I here allude to the inward, innate, and total **BLINDNESS** with respect to every thing that belongs to the kingdom of God—a blindness which is the more inclined to regard itself as seeing, the greater it is—a blindness which is incurable by all human means, and can be healed only by a miracle—a miracle of omnipotent grace, similar to that by which God caused the light to shine out of darkness. I here mean the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. But beware of un-

derstanding by this expression mere lasciviousness, for it denotes the entire state of mind as existing in every man as long as he continues unregenerate. Hence all his actions are comprehended in it, however specious they may be, until he turn sincerely unto God. Of such it may be said, "Take away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." "I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." "Your solemn feasts are an offence unto me." Consider also the horrible word which the Apostle here uses—enmity. An enemy may let himself be appeased; but this cannot be the case with enmity; it must be put away. And the individual may suppose that he pleases God by works, the root of which is enmity against him. If sin is in us, there is enmity against God; or, as the Apostle says, hatred of God. Sin is enmity against God; and were it as mighty as it is wicked, it would destroy God and assume his place, or form such abominable idols as the heathens have. Such is the state of the case with us.

Let me still mention a third thing which secretly reigns over us, and that is UNBELIEF, which is nothing else than blasphemy, and one of the most grievous sins; for by it the true and infallible God is made a liar; and the individual acts towards him as towards a liar and a deceiver. But can any thing more dreadful and abominable be conceived? Such a one asks, "Hath God indeed said?" and answers, "By no means!" Unbelief refuses its assent and concurrence to the divine testimonies, its acknowledgment to the divine threatenings, and its confidence to the promises. It does so, as if there were no God, no word of God; as if every thing was very different to his

statement of it; and as if any thing might be relied upon, hoped, and trusted in more than him. Such is unbelief. It has no other object, and can have no other; nor is any thing able to bring unbelief to other sentiments and other convictions. God alone can do this, and that only by the exceeding greatness of his power, and the operation of his mighty power. The production of faith in the soul is an evident miracle, similar to that of the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead. God himself has concluded all in unbelief. (Rom. xi. 32.) He it is, therefore, who alone can set free. All means are in vain without his co-operation. Though God himself were to speak, as he once did, in dreadful majesty, from the top of Mount Sinai; though Jesus Christ himself were to preach long sermons; though the most astonishing and undeniable miracles were performed, so that it were impossible to think otherwise than that they must produce an effect; yet not only would all be in vain, but the matter would even be rendered worse, in consequence of the enmity of the human heart.

A perfect faith has never been hitherto found in any individual, with one exception. Even to those who really believe, something of unbelief continually cleaves, which shows itself at one time in a greater, and at another, in a less degree, although it no longer rules. Such a species of unbelief manifested itself in a striking manner, in two saints, in its highest degree. The one is mentioned in the Old, and the other in the New Testament. The former is Job. We can scarcely credit our own eyes, when we read his words, in chap. ix. 16, where his unbelief speaks as follows: "If I had called, and he had answered

me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice." In other words, "Though I had the clearest proofs that God had heard my supplications, yet still I find no proof in this of his having really heard me, but feel an inclination to ascribe it to chance, or other means, rather than to recognize the divine operation in it." Is not this perverse? And Job does not say this in a complaining and disapproving manner, but says, that such is the case with him. But if believers are capable of such conduct by reason of remaining unbelief, what may be expected from those who are under the complete dominion of the latter! The other example, from the writings of the New Testament, to which I refer, is that of the holy Apostle, Thomas. His ten fellow-apostles, and as many female disciples, took all possible pains, for a whole week together, to convince him that Jesus was risen from the dead, but in vain. He would not believe, except upon astonishing conditions, and said "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." If a regenerate individual is able to speak thus, what can be expected of natural men; if a friend expresses himself in such a manner, what is to be hoped for from enemies! what proofs will they demand! How obstinately will they say, "I will not believe!"

Our wretchedness, our need of a deliverer, who is El, the mighty God himself, arises, *secondly*, from the law of God, which causes it, and displays it to us. For if there were no law, our misery would not be half so great, according to the words of Scripture, (Rom. v. 13.) "Sin is not imputed where

there is no law ;” for the law entered, that the offence might abound. Without the law, sin would be dead ; and the commandment is unto death, (Rom. vii. 10.) But thanks be to God, the promise is older, and of greater validity than the law, which was added without being able to weaken, much less abolish, the promise. But I am not now speaking of the promises, but of the law. The latter, indeed, contains the most precious promises of life, but it connects them with a condition, which it is impossible for us to fulfil. This condition is contained in the two little words, Do this. If it be asked, what is it ? the whole lies, in a few words : “ Love God supremely, and thy neighbour as thyself.” On these two commandments hang both the law and the prophets. But besides this, it contains a threatening, which comprehends every evil in it ; for “ Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” I will not now prosecute the subject further. If we have not a deliverer, who shows us another way to life, than that pointed out by the law, we are inevitably and eternally lost, even had we offended only in one point. Does not such a state deserve to be termed wretched ? Do we not need a deliverer, and such a one who has redeemed us from the law ; or do we really possess such a Saviour ?

Thirdly, Our wretchedness, our need of a deliverer, is great, on account of the the infernal influence under which we stand. It is true, that this sounds dreadful ; but that this is the truth, can be sufficiently proved from Scripture. We do not mean exclusively such influence as manifests itself in the commission

of atrocious iniquity, as in the case of Judas, of whom it is said, that Satan entered into him, but that influence which is exercised by evil spirits generally. The devil, the god of this world, as he is horrifyingly termed, carries on his work in the children of disobedience. Who is able to destroy this work? He blinds the eyes of them that believe not, that they may not see the clear light of the gospel. Who can destroy this delusion, the author of which is the prince of this world? He seeks to prevent conversion in its very commencement, for when faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; he busies himself in snatching it away again out of the heart, like the birds, which gather up and eat the scattered grain. Even converted persons and believers are warned against him; for although it is said to them, "Ye have overcome the wicked one;" yet it is also said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat." Thus, also, Paul entertained apprehensions with respect to some; lest, even as the serpent beguiled Eve, their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; and the whole church prays, not to be led into temptation, but delivered from the evil one. If we are as sheep, what can we expect to accomplish against such a ravenous wolf; or if men, against such a subtle and poisonous serpent! We are lost, inevitably lost, unless an all-sufficient deliverer appears.

I have hitherto said nothing particularly consolatory, although something of the kind may have occasionally glimmered through. But an acquaintance with what has been premised is one of the first things which we require, in order to attain the only consolation in life and

death. May God, therefore, enable you thoroughly to become conscious of it, to your grief, and, at the same time, to your consolation!

The Apostle speaks, in 2 Cor. i. 8, of a great trouble which befell him and his companions in Asia, so that they were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that they despaired, even of life. But this was, adds he, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us, ye also helping together by prayer for us.

This passage expresses the same thing, which is implied in the name Paltiel, the strong God is my deliverer. He who is in circumstances of distress and danger, requires a deliverer; and he whom no one else can aid, a divine deliverer. I have already treated of the distress and danger in which, by nature, the whole human race is plunged; but there are a few things which I wish to add, before speaking of the deliverer and the deliverance.

Besides the manifestations of our wretched state, of which I have already spoken, it expresses itself, also, in inward stupor, unbelief, and repugnance. To this spiritual stupor and drowsiness, the Apostle draws our attention, when he says, "Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" (Ephes. v. 14.) There is also a natural stupor, which is commonly an incurable and deadly disease. The individual finds it impossible to keep

awake, and an overpowering drowsiness comes upon him. If awakened with difficulty, he immediately falls asleep again, so that he forgets to eat and drink, until at length he can be awoke no more. Whether it thunders and lightens, or his house is in flames, he is not conscious of it. Is not this a hopeless and dreadful state, when it occurs spiritually? And yet such is the case with all men by nature. Paul says, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" This is, indeed, highly necessary. But it must be a very different person to Paul; it must be he who is meant under the name Paltiel, who must pronounce the words, if they are to be of any use; hence the Apostle immediately adds, "and arise from the dead!" He therefore calls this spiritual sleep, a death, and the awaking from it, a resurrection from the dead. But can the dead thus rise? what a deplorable state, and, at the same time, unfelt, unperceived! How much has been already done to awaken the sleepers, but in vain! The human race, at the time of the deluge, were warned, and a space of a hundred and twenty years afforded them for their amendment, and it was said at the same time, that if they suffered this period to pass away without profiting by it, God would sweep them away from the earth. But it was of no avail. They even mocked. The divine judgments then came upon them, and took them all away. What a dreadful scene was that, when God himself gave the law from Mount Sinai, in the midst of appalling thunders, earthquakes, fire, and the loud sound of trumpets, spoke himself to the people, and Moses answered aloud! The scene was so terrible, that Moses himself said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

The people were also violently afraid, and requested that God might not speak to them, except through Moses, and expressed their readiness to do all that God commanded them. This seemed to be something; and yet it was nothing more than is still the case, when some dreadful thunder-storm rolls over the heads of ungodly people, or the earth trembles under their feet; they then begin to pray and be devout, until the danger is over, and every thing returns to its former channel, as was also the case with the Israelites. We will do all, said they. But immediately afterwards they fell into open idolatry and disobedience. Such is man without the grace of God. I hear of cities in which the cholera rages; the most impressive discourses, accompanied by the most manifest godliness, and by miracles, have been found unavailing. O dreadful state! You are all lost, irrecoverably lost, if left to yourselves, if Paltiel, if God himself, does not take your part. And what can induce him to do so with respect to you? They that are asleep often dream in a very lively manner, and are so much occupied, that they imagine nothing else but that they are awake, whilst, in reality, it is nothing but a dream. O how dangerous, when such is the case in spiritual things! "Awake, thou that sleepest!"

There is, besides, a total *unwillingness* to that which is good in natural men. "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life," says Christ. "Ye would not," says he. This is that enmity against God and things divine which constitutes carnal-mindedness. It is not so much inability; for the not being able does not render the individual culpable, but rather excites compassion, as, for instance, when a person is outwardly unable to

hear or retain. But when unwillingness is added to this inability, it becomes culpable; and this is the case with all of you who are naturally unregenerate. You cannot, indeed; but, at the same time, you will not. But when it is the case with any one, that he is able to say, "To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not," when this is the truth, and not a self-deception, when he desires to do all that is good, and that too in the proper manner, such a one is then evidently under the influence of another principle than that of nature; for the natural man acts like those to whom Stephen spoke, and who stopped their ears. They refuse to hear any thing of Christ as the only Saviour. In short, they are the enemies of God. But from whence is the proper will derived? Certainly not from ourselves; it is the gift of God. "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." For we are so deeply fallen, that we can do nothing.

O Saviour, save! O deliverer, deliver! Otherwise, what will become of us! For what else awaits us than eternal damnation in hell, to which all certainly go, who have not Jesus Christ as their deliverer? What more horrible can be imagined than everlasting torments? What are all temporal sufferings compared with them? However great they may be, however long they may last, they cease at length, though it be with life. But nothing ceases in the other world. The worm which gnaws there, dieth not, and the fire which burns there is not quenched: there is no refreshment there, not even if it consisted only of a drop of water. When Jesus, the fountain of every blessing, has once banished the individual, as accursed, into

everlasting fire, there is then no longer a deliverer. If God is weary of forbearing, there is then no more mercy, but eternal torment. He did not spare even the angels, who are superior beings to mankind, and dost thou think he will spare thee? If he drowned the whole antediluvian world, and all mankind, with the exception of eight persons, in the flood, if he has condemned to eternal punishment many kings, princes, and high-priests, how will he spare thee? If he rejected a prophet and an apostle, what security hast thou against being rejected? If many are on the road which leadeth to destruction, art thou not probably one of them? What a dangerous situation! Can we escape? Yes, for we have a deliverer in the person of Jesus Christ.

We have described, in some measure, the natural state of man; that is, his misery, which is great, but not too great for the divine deliverer, who is abundantly competent to rescue us from it, even Jesus Christ, and he alone. However, it is not merely natural men who require a Saviour, but the godly more especially. They are committed to his care in a particular manner. As a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and leads them about, so he protects and guides them. He is their Shepherd, and they his sheep, of which he will not lose one, since, without his superintending care, they would fall a prey to the wolf. But he cares for them, and no one is able to pluck them out of his hands. Moses, indeed, complained to the Lord, that he had laid the whole burden of the people upon him, and confessed, that of himself he was unable to bear it. But a greater than Moses is here. Here is the mighty God, whose powerful

shoulder supports the edifice ; otherwise it would come to nothing, and continue nothing. If we reflect only upon the state of Christians in the present world, we should be obliged to give up all courage, and sink into despair, if we did not behold the deliverer amongst the people of God. Our catechism describes this state, when, in concise and weighty words, it says, that our sworn enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, do not cease assailing us, and that we are so weak, that we cannot withstand them a moment ! What must the disciples have thought, when the Lord Jesus said to them, “ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ? ” What was this else than sending them into the midst of certain death, and making their preservation a miracle ? When, with reference to them, he asked, “ How can the children of the bride-chamber fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? ” he added the prediction, “ But the time will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them ; then shall they fast. ”

What do we think of the state of Christians in this world, since they are not and cannot be unanimous one with another, but have to struggle with themselves ? It is true, we call them godly, believing, pure in heart, heavenly-minded, and that justly. But there is here no wheat without chaff, no gold without alloy ; the Christian is an extremely wonderful creature, composed of strange and opposite elements. A fountain does not, indeed, send forth at the same time sweet and bitter waters ; and yet in a Christian, flesh and spirit exist at the same time, which are contrary the one to the other. A man may be at one time full of faith—as the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “ Now

ye believe"—and at another may feel very far from faith and godliness. Now what would become of the church, under these circumstances, if it were not fitly joined together by the head, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, which causes the body to increase? (Ephes. iv. 16.)

Further; the state of Christians here below, is a state of the cross, the taking up of which Jesus makes a condition, and provides for. His cross, and the atonement he accomplished upon it is, indeed, that which solely and wholly constitutes our salvation, so that Paul says, "I determined not to know any thing amongst you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." But Christ means also, by the cross, the sufferings which he is wont to inflict upon his people. This seems, at first sight, perfectly irrational. We naturally think, hope, and wish that it will not be so, that there will be nothing to occasion us grief and sorrow, nothing but peace and joy, nothing but evident superintending care, and manifest blessings of every kind. Such, we imagine, would be the natural course. But Christ speaks of a cross, with which we must deny ourselves, which, therefore, does not accord with our wishes; and of circumstances which, when they occur, are not joyous but grievous, which we endure, not willingly but unwillingly, and from which we desire to be exonerated as soon as possible. These are represented to us as inevitable; so that a state of sonship without chastisement is no sonship. He that desires with Christ to be exalted, must be abased with him; he who wishes to reign, must suffer with him; or to live, must die with him; and he in whom Christ is to become every thing, must in the same degree

become nothing. How shall our weak shoulders bear this burden, except by means of Jesus helping us to bear it! He only is counted happy, who endures temptation; for after he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.

The state of Christians here below is, lastly, a state of various inward and outward temptations, in which we greatly require unceasing care and attention. Consider, for a moment, that we have not only to wrestle with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness. The present state of the world is by no means conducive to religion and godliness, but the very reverse. If it venture to stand forth, and make itself in any degree conspicuous, it is nothing wonderful that similar scenes occur to those which presented themselves on the appearance of the Apostles, when the people cried out for help against them, seeing that the men who had turned the world upside down had come thither! In spiritual things there is a corrupt atmosphere, a poisonous air, which suffocates that which is good, and hinders it from taking root and growing up; a fog, which obstructs the sight; and a way, on which it is not good to walk. Religion finds so few admirers, that full churches must be regarded as a wonder; whilst in most companies it is forced to be silent. It is undeniable that the powers of darkness are active, and particularly so in the present day. What they cannot compel in the character of ravening wolves and roaring lions, they seek to effect as subtle serpents; and what they cannot hope to attain as panegyrists of godliness, they seek circuitously to effect as preachers of righteousness.

What aspect, therefore, do Christians present in the

world, in such dangerous circumstances? We must confess it is a wretched one. What shall comfort them? On whom shall they hope? In them there is no might against the great multitude that comes against them; but a breaker is gone up before them, and they shall also break through. It is true, that in the world they have tribulation, but let them be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world, and in him they shall have peace. In reality you need no other strength, wisdom, courage, consolation, or joy, than that which you really possess in Jesus Christ. This salt you have in yourselves. And although you may not always be conscious of it, and frequently experience thirst instead of water to quench it, hunger instead of food, mourning instead of joy, and want and privation instead of fulness and abundance, think not the fiery trial strange, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. The conviction of what you are in yourselves must abide in you, and even increase, and perhaps be heightened to the confession of Paul, who said, "I am nothing." You will thus be kept from exalting yourselves, to which you are so much inclined; be preserved, and induced not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate.

Thus we see how unspeakably necessary and utterly indispensable is Paltiel, the deliverer. Whither should we go, if we did not possess him, if he did not take our part with such power and fidelity; had he not said, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and did he not act towards his people like a hen towards her chickens? Hence all shall prove successful, notwithstanding every difficulty; and thus shall the entrance into his eternal

kingdom be nevertheless widely thrown open, although we possess nothing that is requisite for this purpose, any where but in him.

Finally, it remains to be observed with respect to the name Paltiel, what David says, in Psalm xxxii. This is, generally speaking, a remarkable Psalm. He praises in it that supreme blessing, forgiveness of sins from mere grace, according to which, the man is blessed, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. He praises the enjoyment and the feeling which he has of it, God having caused him to feel and become conscious that he had pardoned his transgressions, so that he was able to say, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." But he also mentions the distress he had previously experienced, on being convinced of sin, and on feeling the wrath of God in such a manner, that his soul dried up as the drought of summer, whilst unable to gain courage to confess his iniquity, and to supplicate mercy. At length the Lord granted this to him; and then it was just as when the hard frozen earth dissolves, and when the long closed heavens clothe themselves with clouds, and refresh the parched earth with rain. His heart now expanded into thankfulness and praise, for, in the seventh verse, he says, "Thou compassedst me about with songs of deliverance." Ah, these are glorious songs! O, when the soul has been for a long time miserable and comfortless, when every billow rolls over it, when it hopes for light, and behold darkness, and when at length the hour of peace arrives, and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing beneath his wings; when it is commanded, with the bride in the Song of Solomon, to come from Lebanon, and from the mountains of the

leopards; for "thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse!" O what songs of deliverance! What peace is then enjoyed! how the weary are then refreshed! what repose and tranquillity are then tasted!

Here, indeed, there is nothing permanent. But, finally, sorrow and sighing must flee away; gladness at length shall be upon our heads in His presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore!

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